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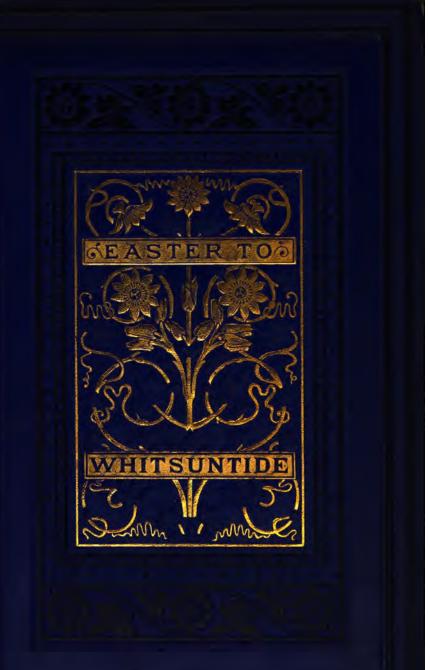
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EASTER TO WHITSUNTIDE BY THE REV. JOHN RICHARDSON, M.A.

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Daily Readings for Poly Seasons

EASTER

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WHITSUNT

BY THE

REV. JOHN RICHARDSON, M.A. INCUMBENT OF CAMDEN CHURCH,

INCUMBENT OF CAMDEN CHURCH

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EASTER TO WHITSUNTIDE.



Easter Bay.

MATTHEW xxviii. 5-8.—" The Angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye; for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. He is not here; for He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. And go quickly, and tell His disciples that He is risen from the dead; and behold He goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see Him; lo, I have told you. And they departed quickly from the sepulchre, with fear and great joy, and did run to bring His disciples word."

THE Christian religion is based upon solid facts. Its offers are all real, because its statements are all true. And one great fact is that Jesus rose again from the dead. He had told His disciples that it

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would be so, and thus during His life He had staked His veracity upon the fulfilment of His own statement. To this statement by Jesus, the Angel called the attention of these women, "He is risen, as He said." The proof of His resurrection, therefore, was a very important matter. If that had been wanting, the whole of our holy religion must have come to nought. "If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain." This will explain the joy with which Mary Magdalene and the other Mary "did run to bring the disciples word." found the empty tomb-and they had heard the Angel's explanation—and so they had mastered the "He is not here: for He is risen."

Easter day should be happy to us, quite as much as it was to them. It is the holy time in which we can go back to the foundation of our Christian faith, and feel that we can be sure that our confidence in Jesus is fully justified, both as to the truth of what He said, and the fulfilment of what He had undertaken for the salvation of our souls. "Come, see the place where the Lord lay," is an invitation to us still to realize all that we have in Jesus. It is clear that He lay in that tomb, and out of that we realize that He was dead; and "He died for our sins." It is also clear that in that tomb He did not continue to lie; and so we know that He is risen; and "He rose again for our justification." "They departed from the sepulchre with fear and great joy." There was joy on 2

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their Lord's account; for He who had been humiliated at the Cross, was now honoured in the resurrection. There was joy on their own account; because they who had been a scattered flock, when their Shepherd was smitten, had now a centre and a rallying point where the old endearments and enjoyments were to be expected still. There was joy on the world's account, because that great message of mercy which seemed to bring so much peace, and manifest so much goodwill, was not, as for a time it appeared to be, a false and a foolish thing. "Jesus and the resurrection"—a gracious person and a blessed fact—such is the proclamation of Easter day.

COLLECT.

Father, holy Father, righteous Father, we draw near to Thy throne of Grace. We come to Thee in the name of Jesus. We come to Thee in the spirit of adoption. We come to Thee, according to Thine own command and invitation. We pray that our sins may be forgiven, that our wants may be supplied, and that our lives may be consecrated. We plead that Jesus died, the just for the unjust, to bring us to Thee. We remember that Jesus rose again—for our justification—that He might live before Thee for us, and we might stand accepted before Thee in Him.

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Lord, give us grace to be humble, to be haters of sin, and lovers of holiness. Give us grace to be thankful—willing to do Thy holy will. Give us grace to be hopeful—looking for the time when we shall be with Christ for ever. Hear us, Heavenly Father, for Christ's sake. Amen.



Easter Monday.

LUKE xxiv. 41-46.—"While they yet believed not for joy and wondered, He said unto them, Have ye any meat? And they gave Him a piece of a broiled fish, and of an honeycomb. And He took it, and did eat before them. And He said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the law of Moses, and in the Prophets, and in the Psalms, concerning me. Then opened He their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures, and said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day."

THE Lord Jesus Christ was familiar with the Scriptures, and the Scriptures He had we still have. "Moses, and the Prophets, and the Psalms" described

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to the Jews of His day the very same writings which continue to our day unmutilated and unabridged. And He told His disciples, that in all these Scriptures things were written concerning Himself; and so He encouraged them and us to search for these same things. "The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy;" and the Bible becomes full of interest, full of instruction, full of real comfort to the soul, when we find Jesus in it. Prophetic utterances, typical ceremonials, representative persons, poetic images, historic occurrences, have all their deeper meanings, and their higher revelations, when our understandings are opened that we may understand these Scriptures. We then see why they were written, and how they have been fulfilled. "Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day."

When the disciples found themselves in their Lord's loved presence, we are told that "they believed not for joy." There was something so much more than they expected, that their first feeling was—that it was too good to be true. And it is always so when a soul first finds Christ—His pardon, His peace, His power to save and bless. There is a happy surprise, a holy wonder, as the richness and the fulness and the sweetness of salvation are brought home to the heart and conscience. But the blessedness proves true. "He said unto them, Have ye any meat? And they gave Him a piece of a broiled fish, and

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of an honeycomb. And He took it, and did eat before them." It was no dream. The things seen were all solid and stable things. The soul of the believer has a like experience still. The Saviour is a divine person, known, loved, enjoyed, felt, followed. And because He is so real, His people are so satisfied. Their hearts burn within them when He speaks. Their eyes are opened to understand when He puts forth His power upon them. Christ becomes our life. His presence becomes our power. Nearer views. clearer views, dearer views of Jesus-such may be the aim and the ambition and the aspiration of all who know how great, how gracious, how good the Lord is.

COLLECT.

God of light and love and power, we call upon Thee, in Christ Jesus our Lord. We need light to understand, and Thou canst give it. We need love to enjoy, and Thou wilt impart it. We need power to overcome, and Thou art able and willing to bestow it. Lift up our minds to higher thoughts. Lift up our hearts to holier objects. Lift up our lives to better service. Thy law is holy; help us to obey. Thy will is wise; teach us to submit. Thy ways are good; enable us to follow. We think of the risen Jesus; bid us rise to Him. We think of the triumphant Saviour; make us to fight for Him. Against all

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the snares of Satan, amidst all the allurements of earth, above all the indulgences of self, make us to stand forth as the lovers, the followers, the witnesses, of the Lord Jesus. Hear us for His Name's sake. Amen.



Easter Tuesday.

JOHN xxi. 3-7.—"Simon Peter saith unto them, I go a fishing. They say unto him, We also go with thee. They went forth, and entered into a ship immediately; and that night they caught nothing. But when the morning was now come, Jesus stood on the shore: but the disciples knew not that it was Jesus. Then Jesus saith unto them, Children, have ye any meat? They answered Him, No. And He said unto them, Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find. They cast therefore, and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes. Therefore, that disciple whom Jesus loved saith unto Peter, It is the Lord."

THERE is a passage in St. Peter's first Epistle which tells us how sad was the disappointment and despair which came upon the disciples when their Lord was crucified. He says, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to His

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abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." Hope was dead. Faith had almost relaxed its grasp upon the person and the promises of Jesus. And so Peter returned to his old occupation, and John was amongst those who went back to the boats and nets of Galilee. But Jesus does not abandon his poor weak followers, when they are ready to abandon Him. He let them spend their night in fruitless toil, and then he pointed out how, even in lower things, he can make them succeed. mighty work for them reminded them of his mysterious presence with them; and when John said to Peter, "It is the Lord," the whole aspect of affairs was changed. What memories would rise, how in the former days He had said on that self-same shore, "I will make you fishers of men!" What better hopes would spring, as the old power appeared once more in Him who was "crucified through weakness?" We see the energy of a new devotion, and have the explanation of a new consecration. The subsequent conversation will tell what all this meant. blessed Saviour drops the name which told of the servant's faith and privilege. It is not now Peter, the rock, whom he recognizes, but Simon, son of Thrice over he calls him by his old Jewish Jonas. name. And the matter to be settled was whether Simon indeed preferred the Galilee or the Gospel "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than

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these?" must have gone to Peter's heart. They are words which still may search the thoughts and consciences of men. What do men love most? About what are they chiefly thinking? After what are they most hotly pursuing? Let Jesus only be seen, in His risen power, in His resurrection glory, and the heart must prompt the lip to say, "Lord, Thou knowest all things, Thou knowest that I love Thee."

COLLECT.

Lord Jesu Christ, Thou art fairer than the children of men, and we offer Thee our heart's best love. Thou hast called us to a holy calling, and we cannot return to the lower and the lesser things. Give us resurrection hopes, resurrection powers, resurrection impulses; for, like as thou wast raised from the dead by the power of the Father, we would also walk in newness of life. Give us a holy zeal. Give us a healthy love. Give a living, lasting faith. Give us all needful grace for Thy dear name's sake. Amen.



Wednesday in Easter Week.

Mednesday in Easter Meek.

2 COR. iv. 13-15.—"We, having the same spirit of faith, according as it is writen, I believed, and therefore have I spoken; we also believe, and therefore speak; knowing that He which raised up the Lord Jesus, shall raise us up also by Jesus, and shall present us with you. For all things are for your sakes, that the abundant grace might, through the thanksgiving of many, redound to the glory of God."

THE apostle Paul falls back upon the example and the experience of David as he gave it in the 116th Psalm. And all Bible lovers know how the old words often steady. "We also believe, and, therefore, speak." All earnest men are thankful for these testimonies from men who know. And the history of the Church involves an accumulation of these facts of the spiritual life, which the ages and the generations have been gathering, to justify faith, and to brighten hope. The backward look rests upon the resurrection of The forward look is fixed upon the resurrection of Christians. And the attitude, expression, and aspiration of the interval between the two finds utterance thus, "that the abundant grace might, through the thanksgiving of many, redound to the glory of God." To be raised up with Jesus, and to be presented before the presence of His glory with

Wednesday in Easter Week.

exceeding joy, is the coming honour before all who love the Lord. For the soul to see Jesus face to face, for the mind to know even as also we are known, for the body to be made like unto His glorious body; these things must include everything that can minister to the honour and happiness of every part of the complete being of a man. "eye hath not seen, neither hath ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things that God hath prepared for them that love Him." Yet, all is real, and all will be realized one day. as Christ rose, will His people also rise. They will see His glory, share His triumph, sit down in His presence at His banquet of love and joy, celebrate the praises of Him who redeemed them unto God by His blood. No wonder there should be the thanksgiving of many, by reason of the abounding grace. No wonder that even here, spite of many cares, many infirmities, many things to turn thought to things that are round about us, the purpose of a Christian's life should be to make everything "redound to the glory of God." For a holy life, for a happy experience, and for a hopeful death, we must turn from the present back into the past, and from the past with all its grand facts as to the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, faith will take one great bound and land thought and desire among the still grander things of the glory, and the kingdom, and the praises of the future, in which all will be

Wednesday in Easter Week.

gathered who have known, trusted, loved the Lord Jesus here.

COLLECT.

Blessed be Thy holy name, most gracious God, for all that Thou hast done for us, and wrought in it. We have no words in which to fitly tell how grateful we should be for Thy goodness. But Thou canst interpret the language of the heart. With our heart we thank Thee. We thank Thee for Christ. We thank Thee for grace. We thank Thee for light, and life, and liberty. Teach us to turn our life into an expression of our love, for Christ's sake. Amen.



Thursday in Gaster Week.

Rom. viii. 18-21.—"I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the Sons of God. For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of Him who hath subjected the same in hope; because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God."

THE resurrection of Jesus affected Jesus Himself. It affected the truth He taught, and the testimony which

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His apostles gave concerning that truth. It affected the hopes of His disciples. It affected the glory of the Covenant God. It will affect both the souls and the bodies of all'whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life. But it goes yet farther; and the history of our world, and of the whole Church, and the entire universe of creaturehood, will only be an illustration and outcome of all the wonders and the glories which are grouped round the risen Lord. The apostle has reminded us that the misery of the world is the result of sin. "The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also which have the first-fruits of the spirit, groan within our-But things are not always to remain as they "The manifestation of the sons of God" -the Lord Iesus with His redeemed people near Him-will bring in that "blessed hope," for which "the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth." Then "the creature itself also"—this material creation below -- "shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God." Sights and sounds, which indicate pain, and wrong, and sin, and selfishness, are things to which the loving spirit of a Christian turns with agony and compassion. There is everywhere a frightful bondage, chains of corruption and oppression, which hands of tenderest pity fain would break. But poor souls still suffer. And under the

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usurpation of the God of this world, evil must continue. But the followers of the Lord Jesus Christ are as much on the side of might as of righteousness. They represent truth, but also triumph. They are saved from the evil, and they are saved for the good. Therefore, let no man be afraid, and let no man be ashamed of confessing Christ. He will have to fight against Satan; but he is a vanquished foe. He may and he must have "the sufferings of this present time." But in them all, the love of Jesus will sustain him; through them all, the wisdom of Jesus will direct him; and out of them all, the power of Jesus will deliver him."

COLLECT.

Lord God Almighty, Thou seest the end from the beginning. "Not a sparrow falleth to the ground but Thou knowest." And Thy servants trust in Thee. Thou mayest call us to suffer; and we say, "Thy will be done." Thou mayest require us to fight, and we take up our weapons of war. Thou mayest bid us wait, and we stand upon our watch-tower, because we know "He that shall come, will come." Keep us by Thy power. Change us by Thy grace. Employ us for Thy praise. And all this we ask for our Redeemer's sake. Amen.

Friday in Easter Week.

Friday in Easter Meek.

2 COR. vi. 16-18, and vii. 1.—"Ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty. Having, therefore, these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God."

THE Christian Church is a temple; on a foundation which God has laid; out of materials which God has chosen; for a purpose which God has formed. The Christian Church is a kingdom; administered by God's laws, governed by God's wisdom, identified with God's honour. The Christian Church is a family; conscious of God's love, bearing God's name, reflecting God's character, to be finally happy in God's home of light, and life, and loveliness. The temple stands apart, for the presence of the Holy One has filled it. The kingdom remains alone. Unlike that of the unfallen, into which rebellion never entered; unlike that of the unsaved, out of which rebellion

Friday in Easter Week.

has never been cast; with its gates ever open to receive all who are tired of misrule, but with its walls ever strong to keep out all that would bring in mischief. And the family abides distinct; fed by the unseen Father's hand, guided by the unknown Father's counsel, guarded by the unchanging Father's And the results of such a position of privilege are traced by the apostle Paul in this wise and pregnant passage. The first effect is separation. "Wherefore, come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord." The instinct which draws the soul to Jesus, draws it away from sin. Open the cage, and the wild bird flies away to its loved liberty again. Break the chain, and the captive escapes out of his prison to seek his home. Let the holy fire be kindled and the fragrance leaves the ashes, and floats upwards unto heaven. The second effect is conse-"Touch not the unclean thing, and I will cration. receive you." The heart recoils in disgust, when the unclean thing is seen in its corruption.

The third effect is sanctification. "Let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." Holiness becometh God's house. Holiness marks God's family, for it is said, "Be ye holy, for I am holy." Holiness results from God's influence. "Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises, that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption

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which is in the world through lust." Happy in privilege, holy in purpose, Christians may well think and thank, ponder and praise.

COLLECT.

Most holy Father, we know Thy promises to be in truth and love. The hope which Thou hast raised Thou will satisfy; because Thou hast chosen us, and not we have chosen Thee. And "if when we were enemies were reconciled," much more "being reconciled, we shall be saved." The work within us is of Thee. The course before us is from Thee. We follow Thee in faith. We lean upon Thee in confidence. Finish Thine own work, and we shall for ever glorify Thee. And this we ask for Christ's sake. Amen.



Saturday in Easter Week.

LUKE vi. 47-49.—"Whosoever cometh to me, and heareth my sayings, and doeth them, I will shew you to whom he is like. He is like a man which built an house, and digged deep, and laid the foundation on a rock; and when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently upon that house, and could not shake it; for it was founded IV.

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upon a rock. But he that heareth, and doeth not, is like a man that without a foundation built an house upon the earth: against which the stream did beat vehemently, and immediately it fell; and the ruin of that house was great."

Our Lord is explaining here how wise and how safe it is for any man to be wholly, fully Christ's. judgment of the world may be different; but the decision of Jesus must be right. In outward appearance he who begins to build without foundation will make earlier progress. The digging is slow and out of view; but it is needful and most important labour. In the calm, clear day, the difference between the buildings may not appear, but the strain will test. seems but an instinct that men should build. preparation must be made for the shelter of the soul. But the time which tests the work will be one which admits of no return to working. The flood will arise. and no contrivance can keep the stream from beating vehemently against the house. Protection cannot come from escape or excuse. Safety is not in the walls, however strongly built, but in the foundation. Jesus only can stem the torrent which will sweep all away who are not resting only on Him. Every refuge of lies must be cleared away; and the rock below must be bare, that faith may build on that. stream beat vehemently upon that house and could not shake it." It could not move the rock; and Jesus "is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever."

Saturday in Easter Week.

It could not displace the building. The pressure of the soul upon Jesus is greater than the pressure of evil upon the soul. The force which binds the saved to the Saviour is greater than that which can be directed by the destroyer against the saved. "He that believeth will not make haste."

But there is a house which folly builds, without a foundation, upon the earth. It represents a sinner preparing to meet his God without a Saviour. It lacks every element of strength. It has not a moment's opposition to offer. "The ruin of that house was great." A fall which leaves the builder homeless; a ruin which comes when a shelter was most required; a crash when all is lost; a failure when another attempt is not allowed; mischief most fatal—loss which can only be final. Such must be and will be to any man who makes his soul's support to be anything other than Jesus.

COLLECT.

Lord of our life, we pray Thee to show us what life means. Judge of our souls, help us to consider what our sin must bring. Author of our salvation, enable us to understand how we can build only on a rock, and find our home remain. Deliver us from a false hope. Wean us from a foolish affection. Guide us to the true sources of joy and peace. We come to Thee through Christ, because only in Him can we be safe. Amen.



First Sunday after Gaster.

I JOHN V. II-I3.—" This is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He that hath the Son, hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God, hath not life. These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God, that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God."

This letter was written for a purpose, "that ye may know that ye have eternal life." Therefore, such knowledge is possible; and, if possible, much to be desired. The knowledge is not necessary to a man's salvation; for Christians may live below the possibilities of faith. But it is necessary to a man's satisfaction; because no thoughtful man should be content to be in doubt, whether if he were called out of this life that is, he is or is not prepared for the life that is to be. And the apostle has shown that all turns upon one point, "He that hath the Son hath life." There may be only an intellectual acknowledgment

First Sunday after Easter.

of Christ; but there ought also to be an experimental acceptance. The one seeth the Son, and the other hath Him. In the one case, Jesus is a being without; and in the other, He is a blessing within. pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell "-fulness of pardon, fulness of grace, fulness of wisdom, fulness of sympathy, fulness of power. And when faith takes Christ, it also takes all that is in Christ. The inquiry, therefore, is whether a man can say that "he hath the Son." And to have Christ, we must cease to have what Christ will not allow. Thus a man cannot have Christ, and keep some idol of iniquity in his heart. A man cannot have Christ, and keep some bitterness of unforgiveness towards a A man cannot have Christ, and keep up his allegiance to Satan, whom Christ expels. hands, open hands, cleansed hands take hold on him.

And the effect of having will be holding. "That ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe in the name of the Son of God." The progress is "from faith to faith"—not from faith to slothfulness—not from faith to presuming to continue in sin. Jesus inspires confidence, and a man trusts. But he also imparts satisfaction, and the man who has trusted, is not ashamed. The life and walk of real faith is the ever proportionate intermingling of light and love. Increase the light, and you relatively increase the love. And the increase of love will crave, and come out into, increase of light. The

First Sunday after Easter.

man who has found much in Jesus, aims at finding more. And the man who has found most, is the best able to give his whole soul and self to glorify that precious Saviour in whom he rests. Eternal life! the very idea should elevate. If the writer of this epistle could say, "We know that we are of God," why should any man say, "Such knowledge is too excellent for me."

COLLECT.

"When Thou saidst, seek ye my face, my heart said unto Thee, Thy face, Lord, will I seek." There is much to be found which is only to be found in Therefore, O merciful God, teach us to Thee. bring empty vessels not a few, that Thou mayest fill them all. Teach us all to know more of our own Teach us all to look more into the character hearts. of our own lives. Teach us all to search more into the nature of our own services. But, chiefly, O our Father, we pray Thee to grant, that we may see more of the beauty of Jesus, feel more of the joy of a great salvation, experience more of the reality of an abiding peace. If Thy grace has given us life, develop it. If we are not yet partakers of life in Jesus, communicate it. Lift us up, O God, in faith, that we may lay hold upon Jesus, and receive out of His fulness. Make us Thine own for ever. Make us thine own now, for the Lord's sake. Amen.

Monday in First Week after Easter.

Monday in First Week after Easter.

LUKE vii. 40-43.—" Jesus, answering, said unto him, Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee. And he saith, Master, say on. There was a certain creditor which had two debtors; the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty; and when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me, therefore, which of them will love him most? Simon answered and said, I suppose that he to whom he forgave most. And he said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged."

It is assumed here that the effect of forgiveness should be love; and it is argued that the greater the fault forgiven, the greater will be the love felt. But we must remember the manner of the forgiveness. One man will wound and humiliate in the way in which he foregoes his power to punish or take revenge. And in such a case, while we are obliged to accept the kindness, we feel no love, because it was not kindly given. Another man will make us feel utterly ashamed of having ever insulted or offended him, seeing that he had a right to our admiration and affection. In God's free forgiveness, every element will be found to cause a sinner to hate his sin, to be ashamed of his sinfulness, and to be thankful that God has received him back again

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to the honour and happiness of service. And this rule will specially hold good concerning the guilt which defiles the soul. As we understand matters better, our knowledge increases as to the evil of sin. The fifty pence are found to be more oppressive now than the five hundred used to be. And in like measure, our love to Jesus grows deeper, fuller, riper, richer, as we feel how He only, and He altogether, has rid us of the thing we feared. "Which of them will love him most?" What a question to put to a man's own soul! "I suppose that he to whom he forgave. most." What a fact to bring home to a man's own heart! The case with both debtors was that of utter insolvency; and every sinner saved is debtor to grace, and a monument of mercy. "He freely forgave them," is the simple fact in the history of all the redeemed both in earth and heaven. Now, one great principle of forgiveness is, that it can only proceed from the person wronged. The creditor can only cancel the debtor's account. If man sin against man. man must forgive. If an individual sins against a community, a society, or a church, the community must forgive. And equally, if a man sins against God, God only can forgive. "Who hath power to forgive sins, but God only?" It is also needful for us to consider well, that forgiveness is to be sought on account of the right thing. No debt weighs so heavily, and alarms so constantly, as debt upon the soul. It is to be sought also only in the right

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direction. "The Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins." It is to be followed out into its right results. "Walk in love, as Christ also has loved us;" this is the guiding principle, this is the evident proof, this is the happy privilege, with all such as know, and love, and serve the Lord Jesus Christ. Forgiven or unforgiven, in anxiety or in peace, in rebellion or in obedience, what are we?

COLLECT.

Most merciful God, we are conscious of grievous shortcoming in the matter of our love. We have not loved Thee with an undivided heart. Pardon Thy servants in this matter. Teach us to love Thee. Make us sensible of Thy great love to us. gift of Thy dear Son, in the communications of Thy free grace, help us ever to trace Thy goodness towards us. Enable us to show forth our love not only with our lips but in our lives. The love of a holy admiration, the love of a happy allegiance, the love of a respectful homage, the love of an entire devotion. the love of an instinctive desire and longing for Thy presence, the love of an outspoken testimony to Thy praise; these are things which we humbly ask for Iesus Christ's sake. Amen.



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2 COR. x. 3-5.—" Though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: for the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds; casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ."

CHRISTIANS "walk in the spirit," and yet they "walk in the flesh." They are yet in the body, and in the world, even while they are in Christ. And it is this double relation which will account for much that is abnormal, and hard to be understood, in the Christian life and character. But it explains that godliness is of earth as well as heaven; a life below, before it becomes a state above. The believer is a sheep with wolves all round—a soldier whose every step is contested by a subtle and powerful foe. But "we do not war after the flesh; for the weapons of our warfare are not carnal." The enemy falls, but not under The weapons are mighty, but only our · blows. The strongholds are carried; but through God. only as the walls of Jericho fell. But, besides these strongholds outside a man-oppositions, difficulties,

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which make a warfare wherever an enemy is concealed; there are also strongholds within a man—imaginations and high things, which must also be laid low, because every thought is to be brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. It is not any man's fancy, and not any man's feelings, which is to settle any man's faith or duty. But the word of Christ, the proposals of Christ, must determine that. There may be wandering thoughts—the mind's hankering after the things which are too high or too low; and all such thoughts are to be attracted, arrested, and attached There may be rebellious thoughts, when the will resents any pressure or direction; and in the pride of the unregenerate nature, a man declares that he will only follow the bent of his own desires. thoughts are to be seized, mastered, subdued, so that Jesus may sit upon His own lawful throne in man man's master, man's emancipator, man's holiest, wisest, and most unselfish friend. The knowledge of God takes primary place amongst the things which affect the world of mind. The obedience of Christ holds highest rank amongst things which prevail in the world of morals. Every thought is in obedience to Christ. These selfish thoughts, uncharitable thoughts, unholy thoughts, must be pulled down from the place they have held within. In the places where passion reigned, and prejudice held sway, and pride of heart stood up to speak proud things, there Tesus must take His stand. When He comes into the

temple of the human heart, His whip of cords must drive the baser occupants all out. The man who was the devil's slave becomes the Saviour's happy servant, and the Father's most thankfully obedient son. Warfare must be. Victory will be; but not from carnal weapons—only by a power which is not from man but God.

COLLECT.

Lord of all power and might, Thy people would cry unto Thee, from the dangers and difficulties of earth, and against the violence and craft of the great enemy of their soul. Hear, Lord, from Heaven Thy dwelling place. When we seem to sink, put forth Thy hand of power. When we are ready to faint, show forth Thy face of love. When we think we stand alone, betrayed, deserted, depressed, come near in sympathy, in sustaining grace, and make our dark souls bright. We pray that we may be wholly We pray that every thought may be brought Christ's. into captivity and obedience under Him. Oh! make us reflect His character, that we may consistently bear His name. Keep us low, and let Him be exalted very high. Hear us, in Thine infinite compassion, for our Redeemer's sake. Amen.



Mednesday in First Week after Easter,

JUDGES vi. 20-21.—" And the angel of God said unto him, Take the flesh and the unleavened cakes, and lay them upon this rock, and pour out the broth. And he did so. Then the angel of the Lord put forth the end of the staff that was in his hand, and touched the flesh and the unleavened cakes; and there rose up fire out of the rock, and consumed the flesh and the unleavened cakes. Then the angel of the Lord departed out of his sight."

WHEN a servant of God is called to do or suffer anything for his Master's honour, he is usually fortified and prepared by a consciousness of his Master's pre-And Gideon's example may counsel and encourage any man who goes out to fight the Lord's battles, and uphold the honour and well-being of the Lord's people. The angel of God instructed Gideon to offer the flesh and unleavened cakes which proved the customary sacrifice in the Lord's service. naked rock was an unusual altar, and the fire and the wood were alike absent. Yet the sacrifice was accepted. At the touch of the angel's staff, the fire came even out of the rock, and the sacrifice was It is often thus with the Lord's servants in their early humble offers of service before the Lord. A man thinks he has a stammering tongue;

but he tries to speak to a sinner about Jesus, and he wonders at the effects of his feeble testimony. Another man makes an honest but a prayerful beginning in some labour of love, and work of faith; and he is astonished at the blessing with which God has crowned his labours. He cannot take the credit of success. any more than the cold rock, and the dry staff could create the fire. But young faith learns strange experiences; and when it has been honoured in its weakness, it grows up into a holy boldness, and its manhood doings are things for which it can only look up and thank. The account of Gideon's victory is full of the deepest interest. We learn from it what kind of persons they are whom the Lord employs. It was not by many, but by few—not by the selfish who kneel down and drink, but by the unselfish, who only bend and lap—that this deed of daring was achieved. We learn also what are the instruments which the faithful are to employ when they go forth to face their enemies. Lamps in pitchers tell how the flight of darkness must follow the going forth of light, and trumpet notes, sharp, clear, continuous, will indicate the way in which the false grow fainthearted, confused, alarmed, ashamed, when God's utterances are heard. When all around is dry, the believer's fleece is full of the dew which God distils. And when the things of earth are tearful, the believer's portion is full of peace and joy. The camp of God is never without its hosts fully equipped for

victory. And no night is so dark, no crisis of danger so desperate, in which a little band, like Gideon's, will not be drawn together, to bide God's will, do God's work, claim God's promises, and realize God's power. We serve a noble Master. We have taken up a noble cause. We shall join in a glorious triumph, if we have united ourselves to the Lord, to be His and His for ever. "Who is on the Lord's side, who?" This is no time for wavering. This is no place for hesitating. Be firm, be true, be outspoken; for God expects that they who are His at all shall be His altogether.

COLLECT.

Our God and Father in Christ! Thou doest according to Thy will in the armies of Heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay Thine hand, and say, what doest Thou? Unto Thee shall all flesh come, and therefore we now come. Cast us not away from Thy presence. Help us to wait upon Thee in prayer; and to watch for the answer of peace which Thou mayest be pleased to send. We ask for a tender conscience. We ask for real repentance. We ask for a child-like faith. We ask for a submissive will. We ask for a consistent life. We ask for broader, deeper, higher experience in the things which concern the soul's peace. May the Holy Spirit teach us about Jesus, seal us for

Jesus, and comfort us in Jesus. Thou canst bring us water out of the flinty rock. Thou canst make fire to ascend out of the cold stone. Whatever is needful that our sacrifice of self and of service may be complete, good Lord, be pleased to grant, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.



Thursday in First Week after Easter.

2 COR. xii. 7-9.—"Lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me."

What Paul had heard and felt when he was taken up into paradise might have been supposed sufficient to cure him for ever from pride of heart. But it was not so. A special provision, on the contrary, was needed, lest he should be exalted above measure. Let no man, after this, reckon upon exemption from tempta-

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tion, or escape from infirmities in the flesh. There will be conflict so long as the servants of Jesus are in the world. But God has placed us where we are, and He has arranged for the supply of such things as we Before St. Paul realized the true condition of things, he prayed that the messenger of Satan might depart; but when the whole case was put before him, he saw the goodness and the wisdom which had appointed all, and he said, "Most gladly, therefore, will I rather glory in my infirmities." It is so still with the Lord's people. So soon as they see God's will, they surrender their own. So soon as they find out where their strength lies, they rest their souls on that. There is a special consolation and encouragement in that fact, "The power of Christ may rest upon me." What that power is, Christ Himself has told. power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth." This is the soul's defender. This is the heart's pro-This is the will's director. The power can hold every enemy in check. The power can bring every blessing to bear on all who follow Christ. the power can take hold upon the very least and lowest and weakest of the lovers of Jesus, and keep them steady and safe, whatever may be the collisions and convulsions which happen amongst earthly things. The thorn in the flesh does not wound the conscience or penetrate the heart, because the sufficient grace has both a shielding and a soothing efficacy. And the messenger of Satan, who may buffet a believer, can-

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not capture or cripple the man on whom the power of But the conditions on which this heavenly Tesus rests. force uplifts the consciously weak believer, are to be found in simple trust. To be "kept by the power of God," a man must lean upon the everlasting arm of God. All that rests upon the rock will stand when the storm arises; but everything that is upon the sand. even though leaning up against the rock, will be swept away. The centre of gravity in spiritual things is the heart; and if that be not resting within the Covenant. within the area of the one foundation, there must be ruin and loss. The power of Christ, and that alone, will sustain any man in the day when the pressures and the trials come. All over life, and all through death, let the wise Christian say, "I will glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me."

COLLECT.

O eternal God, who art the Author and Giver of all good things, Thy servants bend the knee before Thee with reverence and godly fear. Thou hast been very gracious in sparing us to this hour. Thou hast been very merciful in continuing to us both reason and grace, by which we may know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent. We plead for ourselves that we may rejoice in Thy salvation. We pray for all Thy believing people, that they may be united more closely by faith to Thee, and more entirely in love one towards another. We pray

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for all who are ignorant, estranged, oppressed, that they may be brought nigh by the blood of Jesus. Lord, perfect in us all a knowledge of Jesus. Perfect in us all a happy fellowship with Jesus. Perfect in us all a holier walk after Jesus. So shall we thank Thee, and praise Thy name. And we ask all in our Saviour's name. Amen.



Friday in First Week after Easter.

Luke ix. 28-31.—"He took Peter and John and James, and went up into a mountain to pray. And as He prayed, the fashion of His countenance was altered, and His raiment was white and glistening. And, behold, there talked with Him two men, which were Moses and Elias: who appeared in glory, and spake of his decease, which he should accomplish at Jerusalem."

THERE are three passages of Scripture which Christians should often read. They all describe the glory of that Jesus whom Christians love. One is in the sixth of Isaiah, concerning which the Gospel of St. John has said, "These things said Esaias, when he saw His glory and spake of Him." Another is in the first chapter of the Revelation of St. John, where the beauty and the majesty of the Saviour are set forth.

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And the third may be any one of the Gospel narratives of the Transfiguration. From such a familiar acquaintance with the Scriptural facts, we shall not easily be drawn down to some lower and meaner ideas as to what the Lord is. And this is important; because the elevation of our Christianity will be according to our exaltation of Christ. That can be no inglorious or uncertain warfare, out of which the Great Captain of our salvation has carried so great honours. And if the first fruits of the great harvest are so rich and beautiful, men may well sow the seed in joyous faith and hope, for the reaping will be a glorious ingathering when the harvest of the earth is The scene of the Transfiguration has given us Jesus in His royal apparel, in His espousal robes, in the brightness of His loving face. But it has associated with Jesus these representative men as partakers in His glory, and interested about His work. knows of Moses' grave. And Elias was translated that he should not see death. And the three disciples have long slept in the dust of the earth. Yet all have glory where Jesus appears in their midst. "The Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the Archangel, and the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord." all the glory will come memories of the grace. 36

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happy song contains ever this one strain, "Thou hast redeemed us unto God by Thy blood." Heaven, Jesus is "a lamb as it had been slain." And the fine linen, which is the righteousness of the saints, is explained in this fact: "They washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the The men who stand by the Cross below are looking upwards for the Crown, which the glorious King shall put on their heads one day. And the glorified ones who shall stand ever round about the throne, will look back upon the Cross, and find fresh ingredients for gratitude, fresh incentives for praise, fresh themes for adoring love, fresh thrills in admiring worship before the throne. Let no man's heart fail. The choice of a Christian will be justified when all the particulars are known. The career of a Christian will be understood when all the conditions of it have appeared. The crowning joys and triumphs of a Christian will be experienced when the glorious Master shall welcome His own, in the presence of a universe of sentient life, in the home of the Father of The glorious Jesus is the gauge and guarantee of the Church's glory; and it is our wisdom to appreciate Him here whom we shall serve, and praise, and love, for ever and for ever.

COLLECT.

O Lord Jesus Christ, who ever livest to make intercession for us, we rejoice in the knowledge that Thou

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hast finished the work which was given Thee to do. Thou sittest at the right hand of the Majesty in the Heavens. Help us to appreciate Thy glory. Teach us to realize and enjoy Thy grace. Enable us to lay hold upon Thy covenant, to plead the power of Thy precious blood. Cast out from us the spirit of fear, and create in us "the spirit of power, of love, and of a sound mind." Show us how secure we can be in Thee, and how satisfied we may be from Thee. We long to look upon Thy glory. We hope to stand perfect and complete in Thy righteousness. We desire to be instructed, fitted, and filled for Thy eternal praise. Keep us, help us, feed us, fill us, for Thy name's sake. Amen.



Saturday in First Week after Easter.

GAL. i. 3-5.—" Grace be to you and peace, from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

THERE is an order and connection between these two words—grace and peace. For grace is the root

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of peace, and peace ought to be the fruiting of There cannot be true peace, if there is no real grace. But there may be grace which has not yet developed into abiding or abounding peace. Without grace, a man cannot be holy. Without peace, a man should not be happy. But both must come from above. The source of both is in God the The channel of both must be "from our Lord Jesus Christ." The explanation both of source and channel is to be found in this. "Who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God our Father." The thing to be dealt with was our sin. None other could deal with it effectively, but our Lord Jesus Christ. And when He undertook for us. He was required and prepared to give Himself. It was a free and gracious act on the part of Jesus; and yet it was according to the Father's will, and in virtue of the covenant ordered in all things and sure between the Father and the Son. It involved the giving Himself to come upon the scene of His people's fall, to take their nature, bear their iniquities, meet and master their enemy, suffer and die in their stead. The result to be attained was to "deliver us from this present evil world." Salvation was never meant to sanction, or to screen, or to connive at sin. was designed not only to deliver from the penalty, but also from the power and pollution of our sins. Salvation, therefore, was from the lower bondage, but unto

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the higher service. The blood was to be followed by the oil, and the ransomed were to become "holiness unto the Lord." And the final effects must be, "to whom be glory for ever and ever." The sin was a reflection upon the character and government of the King. It intimated that His subjects felt themselves aggrieved, oppressed, wronged, misgoverned. But salvation will be the vindication and justification both of the ways, and words, and will of God. The Christian is nothing if he be not a loyal and loving subject of the Most High. To be indifferent to the King's honour-silent on the King's matters-shrinking before the King's enemies-scornful amongst the King's friends—is the policy only of those who have never come into the King's presence. The grace and the peace have been given in order that men now should "show forth the praises of Him who hath called them into His marvellous light." glory will also be "for ever and ever." Hence it so suits the conditions of those who are to live for ever. The power to praise will never be wanting. The incentives to praise will multiply and enlarge, as the object opens out in its glory, and the subjects find their delight increase. To glorify God, will be the happiness of eternity. To glorify God, will be the full employment of all the faculties which the Creator has put upon the creature. Universal, unceasing, untiring praise! Who would not add a hearty Amen, when such a promise, and such a prospect opens?

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Truly, it is a blessed service. Happily, it is a real inheritance. Who would lie down in the valleys? Who would linger long among the mists? The higher walk—the riper experience. Such will be the wise man's aim.

COLLECT.

Heavenly Father, hear Thy children's prayer. confess that we have failed in love, in service, in worship before Thee. We desire to be restored to Thy favour, to be educated in Thy family, and to be fitted for Thy holy home in Heaven. We make no denial, offer no excuse, attempt no concealment. art the same Lord, whose property is, always to have Lord, have mercy upon us. Lord, receive us graciously. Father, speak peace. Gracious God, put forth Thy power, fill us with Thy Spirit, guide us unto Thy glory. We thank Thee for grace given. We pray Thee for peace to be given. We plead Thy own love before Thee, and say, "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things." Father forgive. Our God, be pleased to bless, for Tesus' sake. Amen.





Second Sunday after Easter.

JOHN x. 14-16.—" I am the good Shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine. As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep. And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one Shepherd."

This good Shepherd is the proprietor of the flock. The sheep are His-given to Him by the Fatherpurchased by Him at the price of His own lifegathered to Him by the grace and power of the Holy There may be many folds, but all will finally Ghost. unite in one flock. There cannot be many shepherds, though every servant tending the sheep is carrying out the Shepherd's purpose and having the Shepherd's protection, sympathy, support, and care. The good Shepherd came to gather out a people for the Father's glory. He knew what the Father means and requires, and will bestow upon such as are gathered into His He knew, also, what the sheep requiredwhere found, how fed, by what way to be guided right. He knew the violence of the enemy against the flock; and He laid down His life, that no wolf may destroy

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such as He protects. He knew where green pastures lie, and deep cold waters spring; and such as follow His leading, are found happy and contented under His care. Sinners need to know and to remember who their owner is. If Jesus have no relation of grace to them, they can have no relation of glory with Him. If they have no ear, no love for His voice, there will be for them no comfort, no welcome, no blessing, when He shall one day speak from Heaven. Amongst the goats, Jesus has no attractions. Against the wolves, Jesus has no conditions. But amongst the sheep, His heart is always open, His power is ever put forth, His promises and His purposes are unchangeable and unchanged.

In the early days the flock seemed to belong only to one people, and the limited area of one small land. But the grandeur of the enterprise of Jesus has been more and more understood and acknowledged as time has been rolling on. Beyond the limits of Israel's land and people, the vast area of the earth and man has gradually been explored. And wherever man is found, there Jesus finds His sheep. Find a sinner (and you find one wherever you find a man), and you have a being who needs salvation, and one whom Jesus only can save. "Tell it out among the heathen." Plead everywhere, always, with man about God, and with God about man, and you will never go beyond the borders of opportunity, or the limits of Gospel grace. These are the facts which make

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Christianity so great. The solitary know that they are part of a multitude. The oppressed can feel that "no weapon formed against them can prosper." The weak remember the Shepherd's everlasting arms. The weary know His ever beating heart of love. The presence, the power, the covenant, all appeal to faith, and hope, and love; and Shepherd and sheep are one. In Christ, on Christ, for Christ, with Christ, such are the steps in a course which, beginning in freeness, must end in fulness. Starting in faith it will be perfected in fruition, a thing of feebleness below, but to be a thing of full developed enjoyment above.

COLLECT.

"Lord, I believe, help Thou mine unbelief."

"Lord, teach us to pray." Teach us to pray with the heart. Teach us to pray according to Thy will. Teach us to pray through the mediation of Jesus Christ. We pray to be enlightened by Thy Holy truth. We pray to be changed by Thy mighty grace. We pray to be comforted by Thy indwelling Spirit. We pray to be associated with Thy purposes, and to be numbered amongst Thy people. We pray to be pliant and plastic under Thine hand, to be docile and obedient under Thy guidance, to be prepared for Thy coming, to be ready for Thy kingdom. Lord, hear our prayer for Christ our Saviour's sake. Amen.

Monday in Second Week after Easter.

GAL. iii. 11-13.—" That no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for the just shall live by faith. And the law is not of faith: but the man that doeth them shall live in them. Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us."

"How shall man be just with God?" This is a question which rises up from age to age, and to which a full, plain, and sufficient answer should, if possible, be found. The apostle Paul found such answer in the prophet Habakkuk, "The just shall live by faith." And in founding an argument upon this he brings out a striking fact, that every word was emphatic in his reading of the verse. He quotes it three times in his Epistles. In Rom. i. 17, the stress is laid on the first word, "The just shall live by faith." The believers cannot continue among the enemies, among the opponents, among the rebellious against God. are "justified" and "accepted in the beloved." In Heb. x. 38, the middle word gives point to the argu-"If any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in them," for "the just shall live by his faith." The principle of faith is not for a day, but for a life; not for seasons, but for existence; a thing influencing every part, actuating every effort, consecrating every service, continuing in every moment of life, and thought, and duty. In the passage under review this day the last are the emphatic words.

"The just shall live by his faith." And here we must not overlook the language, "No man is justified by the law in the sight of God." In the sight of man, a man's profession can only be justified by his practice. What a man says is not necessarily the evidence of what a man is. But to justify a man's person, in the sight of a man's God and judge, we must not look to law or works, but to grace and faith. The law commands and comments, but it cannot comfort the consciously guilty, or justify the evidently condemned. Moses may bring us to Jesus, but Jesus only can bring us to Heaven. "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law." Against him the law could lay no charge, because He did no sin. Before Him it can establish no claim, because "His own self bore our sins in His own body on the tree." Now, Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, but He has not exempted us from the law's authority. God's law is the reflection of God's mind and will, and whatever was once right can never again become wrong. "We love Him because He first loved us;" but when our love, in very gratitude, seeks to express itself in service, it asks, "What is written in the law?" It is not a man's fancy, nor some intuitive faculty of a man's love, nor some speculations or imaginations of a man's conscience, which is to be the rule of a man's life and service. The Master has defined the conditions of He has laid down the way in which His people are to be found. "The will of the Lord be

done" is the heart's best answer when the thought comes up, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" Sin is a transgression of the law, and holiness is obedience to it. Jesus is the life; but the commandment is the way in which living men will walk. Out of very disgust at sin, out of very memory of the bondage, a believer is rejoicing in the freedom which yet prompts him and enables him to be "the servant of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart." Redeemed from sin and for service, such is the true character of all who are Christ's by faith.

COLLECT.

Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Hosts! is holy—Thou art holy, and "without holiness no man shall see the Lord." But we are unholy. our righteousnesses are as filthy rags." Ours is the leper's cry, "Unclean, unclean." But "the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin," and we plead the blood. And the promise is, "Your sins and your iniquities will I remember no more," and we plead the promise. Father, forgive us, for we have sinned. God be gracious unto us, for we are poor and helpless. The law accuses us, the Devil witnesses against us, our own hearts condemn us. We are shut out from the hope of denying, or undoing, or unlearning our sin. Lord, we come to Thee, to Thy throne of grace, to Thy mercy seat of covenant and of love. Undertake Be merciful unto us. Receive our persons and our prayers for the sake of Jesus Christ.

Tuesday in Second Week after Easter.

LUKE xi. 9-11.—"I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone?"

THE philosophy of prayer is found in God's promise to give. A hungry man would not hold out his hand for a loaf if he had reason to believe it would be held "He that cometh unto God must back in sport. believe that He is, and that He is the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him." And the explanation given is that God is the Father of all who are in They are "heirs of God and joint heirs Christ Iesus. with Christ;" and "if ye being evil know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more"-(Oh! the depth of meaning and of consolation in those three words !)-" how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him." There is propriety in prayer. There is prevailing power in There is an undoubted reality in prayer. The three words—ask, seek, knock—seem to suggest three stages in supplication. "Ask" says the silence is broken, the stubbornness gone, the throne of grace approached, and want in the presence of love has opened its heart, opened its hand, opened its mouth

The idea is more advanced in the word " seek." It is the groping of a man who has not yet come into the light; the digging of a man who has not yet handled what the mine contains. forth of a man who has not yet found his friend. Yet it is the act of one who moves, inquires, pursues, and The unfledged brood remains in the nest till the parent bird brings the food. But when the feathers are grown they follow and find. Do we ask. The word "knock" has a still and also seek? The closed door seems to increase further meaning. the difficulty. The asking says that God is known to The seeking implies that He is not far away; but the knocking seems to suggest that He has withdrawn for a season, and placed a barrier between us and Him. It is the energy of faith which bids us stand and knock. The importunity of prayer is its high recommendation before our God.

Then come the faithful promises. And the argument is very simple and direct. "Every one that asketh receiveth," therefore "ask, and ye shall have." Think of a sinner, weary, and worn, and sad. He has wandered far, and found no help. Over a closed door, he has read that one word, "knock." His hope was stirred, his hand was raised; and timidly, trustfully, he knocked. The door was opened wide, a bright gleam of joy came forth, and the sinner went within. Oh, what a change! Oh, what a thrill! Oh, what a discovery! But a man cannot stop at

his prayers. If he really desires, and truly asks, he must be ready to accept what the Lord will offer. To look in with an idle curiosity—to turn away with an uninterested carelessness, is an insult and an injustice before our God. The facts are there. The promises are there. The counsels are there. "Ask, and ye shall have; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened." What if we ask, and then refuse; find, and then throw away; knock, and then turn aside. Such things cannot be reverent, are not reasonable, never will be right. No; be earnest, be honest, be truthful in your prayers.

COLLECT.

Eternal God, who knowest our necessities before we ask, and our ignorance in asking, we beseech Thee, teach us how to pray, for what to pray, through whom to pray in Thy presence. Help us to feel our need, and to come to Thee for its relief. Help us to confess our sins, and to call upon Thee for pardon. Help us to understand our weakness, and to lean upon Thee for strength. We believe in Thy love. We are persuaded of Thy power. are satisfied with Thy promise. "Thou that hearest prayer, unto Thee shall all flesh come." come now to Thee. Lord, accept us. Lord, appoint for us. Lord, appear for us. From Satan, from self, from sin, from earth, we now do turn to Thee. Hide not Thy face. Cast not out our prayer. Our faith

takes hold upon Thy faithfulness. Heavenly Father, hear us; for Jesus' sake. Amen.



Wednesday in Second Week after Easter.

GAL. iv. 6, 7.—" Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ." THE relationship justifies the language. Because men are sons they can cry "Father." It was not always "No more a servant," implies a servant once. The prodigal may forget home and parent; but parent has not fotgotten him, and the door is still open for his return. Oh! precious love of God. How deep, how pure, how lasting, who can tell? poor spendthrift's heart was bidding him say, "Make me as one of Thy hired servants;" but the warm welcome to the father's arms stopped his trembling wish, in the fulness of the unlooked-for blessing. never can be right with the soul if this condition of servitude is sufficient. True, all God's children are glad to do Him service. The family life accepts thankfully what is the family law. But the effect of faith is freedom. The new spirit which has quickened and must illumine the soul is the Spirit of Adoption.

51

"Thou art no more a servant, but a son." Some men are enemies, rebelling, resisting, defying, disliking. Those are the children of the wicked one—wearing his voke, doing his business, involved in his ruin, if grace shall not set them free. Other men are servants—fearing, labouring, failing, with a consciousness of being unprofitable, and a heavy, dull expression of submission which comes from the inevitable and not from the desired. These men are washing with snowwater, and find their hands never are clean. are promising to pay when they are utterly bankrupt in all that God calls good. And yet religion is always service; but it is that of a son, and not a slave. Its moving power is love, not fear. It acts freely, and not by force. The spirit of a son in the heart is that which animates all the life. "And if a son, then an heir of God through Christ." Faith has much, but expects much more. The relationship secures the possessions, and what those will be, thought fails to understand, because it has never yet, by searching, found out God. The heir to an earthly inheritance prepares for coming of age. He educates his mind and heart for what will be his when he enters upon his possession. So with the heir of God. He is but a minor yet; and so he is "under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the Father." But the present surroundings do not satisfy. He cannot live as if he were never to reach his true position. name of heir implies the other name of son; but the

spirit of a son will not let the better thought escape, that the son is also heir. And all through Christ. Thus it is, that as the privileges are enjoyed, and the prospects brighten, gratitude becomes more intense towards Jesus Christ. Real religion implies a true recumbency upon Jesus. The change of relation, from slave to son, comes out of the redeeming blood. The change of feeling, from fear and hate, to love and gratitude, comes out of the regenerating influence of the Holy Spirit whom Jesus sent to be the Comforter. The change of prospect, from the things which are seen and temporal, "to the things which are not seen and eternal," comes from the guardian care and discipline by which Jesus trains the soul for Heaven. If any man would be happy, if any man would be active, if any man would be faithful, he must remember "God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father."

COLLECT.

O, Thou, that dwellest in the light that no man can approach unto, shine down upon our dark souls. Reveal to us Thy love, and make us conscious of Thy grace. We desire to be as Thy children, trusting, obeying, serving Thee. We long to be in Thy presence where all the family meets, where all the home joys are known. We ask Thee to unlock our lips, that we may cry. We ask to unburden our consciences, that we may call Thee Father. Send down Thy Holy

Ghost to comfort us, and to exalt us to the same place whither our Saviour Christ is gone before. We point to the merits of Jesus. We plead only the sacrifice made upon the Cross for sin. Our Father, the life which Thou hast given, we thankfully, lovingly, rejoicingly would dedicate to Thee. As we are to be thine heirs, so would we be Thy sons. Hear us, for Christ's sake. Amen.



Thursday in Second Week after Gaster.

RUTH i. 16, 17.—" And Ruth said, Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go: and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God. Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the Lord do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me."

"MANY waters cannot quench love." And money cannot purchase it. "If a man should give the substance of his name for love, it would utterly be contemned." It is sympathy which weaves the silken bonds. And often it is in sorrow, that the heart opens and clasps what it will let go no more for ever. True love can bear repulses. It can argue on when others, who followed not out of love, have turned

back and gone away. And this is in only human love. What, then, may not be expected from love divine? Between creature and creature the golden thread is strong; but when the soul fastens upon the Saviour—when man finds the love of God for the soul, and feels the soul's love for God, then "love is strong as death"—living when death is dead—lasting, when every lower attachment has been absorbed in the full deep feeling of a spirit attuned for glory.

There is love as a bond in life. It prefers the person to place, or circumstance, or condition. It is at home in any country, and fruitful in every climate; it is the bond of brotherhood, and a key to unlock the sympathies which are between soul and soul. Naomi was more to Ruth than country or kin could be. More, far more, is this understood in the love which is between Saviour and saved. Jesus is more than father and mother, and wife and children. He consecrates the love for them all; but He elevates above the love of any if they come between the heart and Him.

There is love as a bond in death. The offices of love continue while the objects of love remain. They who have been joined in life are glad to think that they shall not even be divided in death. One grave will hold two friends; and affection thinks even that the tomb will not part. It is actually so in Jesus. The buried bodies are all to be gathered unto Him. The emancipated souls, so soon as they

are set free meet, because to depart is to be with Him. There is light even in the dark valley, if there is love: there is union even in dissolution when hearts cling to one God, one Saviour, and one hope. Oh, for that which joins us in unbroken bonds—that comforts us with unchanged endearments—that keeps us over life and through death, so that we are one in Jesus!

There is love as a bond for eternity. tess, Ruth, could only think of death as a thing to She knew not what Christians know. may sunder for a season, but only that it may bring together again for ever. It is sad when friends on earth take different roads in living: one may be living with, and the other without Christ. In such a case, there can be no love in its purest, holiest, and more perfect form. The two can love only on the lower grounds of earthly preference; and when they die, they take different paths: to right and left their divergent courses run. But think of such as are one both in nature and in grace; both in name and in Jesus; both in the flesh and in the spirit! They are united so as to go apart no more. trickling dew-drops, meeting and mingling, they flow on together; and in the great sea of a shoreless eternity, they will be together in God, in Heaven, in everlasting life. Oh, to be in bonds of love, love for the holy Jesus, love for the brotherhood of faith, love for the home in Heaven!

COLLECT.

O. God of love, its author, its brightest example and illustration, we pray to be knit together in love! The sin which has separated from Thee and Thine, has left us in a cold, narrow, dark world. We long to escape out of selfishness. We wish to spring upwards into gratitude. We feel that Thy love is warm upon our blind eyes; and we long to see Thy face, Thy Fatherly face of love. Oh, show us Thy glory, that we may delight in Thy love and loveliness! Weave, oh God, this golden thread between our soul and Thee! Retune our jarring hearts, and bring out that sweet tone which is in unison between us and Thee. Fill us with Thy love, that we may flood life with Bid us be bright, kind, communicative of Help us to be so Thine, as to be like Thyself in love. We ask all in the Saviour's name. Amen.

Friday in Second Week after Easter.

LUKE xii. 35-37.—" Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their Lord, when He will return from the wedding; that when He cometh and knocketh, they may open unto Him immediately. Blessed are those servants whom the Lord, when He cometh, shall find watching."

"THE Lord shall so come in like manner, as ye have seen Him go into Heaven." This is the foundation

on which hope rests. "That blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ." When He shall come, no man knows. That He will come, all men believe, who accept what the Word of God has said, as it has said it, concerning the Lord Jesus. In the solemn event, all Christians have an interest; and for it all wise believers will prepare. The attitude of the Church is to wait; the wisdom of the Church is to watch; the duty of the Church is to be ready, so that "when He cometh and knocketh, they may open unto Him immediately." His return will be from the weddingwhen He comes to claim His bride, that she may be with Him for ever. His return will be to the banqueting house, and all who ever loved Him, may rejoice before Him "in the days of His espousals, in the day of the gladness of His heart." Girded loins and burning lamps are to distinguish all His servants: for He will come like a thief in the night. like the flash of lightning across the heavens. ever shall welcome His coming, must be ready; and no man will be ready who has not been waiting; and no man who has been waiting will leave his garments ungirt, or have his lamp untrimmed. This is no place for slumber, when the Judge may be standing at the door; this is no time for slovenliness, when every energy should be braced to do the Lord's work, and wait the Lord's appearing; this is no scene for carelessness, when oil may be had for the light, and 58

the light must be ready for the procession, for at midnight the cry may rise, "Behold the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet Him." On every ground of propriety, therefore out of that respectful attention which the Lord should have from "all them that love His appearing," this readiness of faith and hope should appear in all Christ's servants. Lord has added a personal consideration which wise men vet may feel. "Blessed are those servants, whom the Lord, when He cometh, shall find watching." We can well conceive what the secret and the source of that blessedness must be. To be happy at the sight of Him, whom they have loved so long, and of whom they have heard so much, this must be one great part of joy. To be conscious that the final accomplishment has been reached, when all the night of weeping is over, and the bright home of love is found; this must be richest joy. To be satisfied with the banquet, and sit down under the banner of love; this will be glory. No wonder that wise servants wait and watch, and long and look, and prepare and pray. But what is the readiness to be? Thoughts, feelings, desires, all girt up within the girdle of truth, so that no lower affection shall prevent the spontaneous outgoing of the whole heart and soul after Jesus for ever. Understanding, hope, aspiration all clear—fed by the spirit's secret oil flaming out clearly in the face of the darkness of this world—a marked decision, a burning witness, a bright

Friday in Second Week after Easte:.

example, that Jesus has a retinue ready to go after Him whenever, whithersoever He may lead. Be ye also ready.

COLLECT.

Our precious Lord and Master, we believe that Thou wilt come, and that Thy coming will be Thy people's comfort, glory, triumph, blessing. And we desire to be waiting for Thy return. Suffer us not to sleep under this world's influence for evil. Permit us not to be fearful as if Thy coming were so delayed as to be undesired. Wean us from everything which would withdraw our love from Thee. Thou art the star of our hope. Thou art the dawn of our day. Give us soberness of expectation. Give us simplicity of faith. Give us sincerity of desire. Give us consecration of service. Help us to represent Thee here. Teach us to reflect something of Thy brightness now. Keep us by Thy grace, for Thy glory at Thy coming. We ask these things, believing Thou art prepared to give them for Thy name's sake.



Saturday in Second Week after Easter.

EPHES. i. 13, 14.—"In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also, after that ye believed, ye were sealed with

that holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of His glory."

THE several stages of the life in the soul of man are set out here, and any man may determine for himself at what stage his own soul life stands. Some men have never heard the truth, the Gospel of our Salva-This may be their misfortune, or it may be Some men have heard, and yet have not trusted: intellectually have acquiesced, but have not really accepted; and others have both heard, and also believed and trusted; but yet have failed fully to appropriate and enjoy. But others have been sealed with the Holy Spirit of Spirit-to whom the promised Holy Spirit has come in with a witness; with the impress of God's hand marking them, claiming them, and acknowledging them as His own, and to be His And yet even this is but an earnest. possession has been purchased; but it has not been redeemed. The whole man, body and soul togetherthe whole Church, all that have been, all that are, all that are to be the Lord's, have been bought with a price, the purchased possession of Him who "gave Himself for us." Until the redemption, the earnest has been given; but after the redemption, when the glorified body and the sanctified soul are gathered together and presented in the presence of the Father with exceeding joy, then the inheritance will have been entered; the heavenly portion found. And so the

final stage is reached, "unto the praise of His glory." This is the glorious end, to which all other ends are This is the upper platform, towards which all other heights are only steps. This is final service, to which all lower worship was but a preparation and a prelude. This is the full song in which all the voices join - the temple-worship in which all the ransomed have their place and part. Religion is the true nobility of man. That which suits all his needs. meets all his cravings, draws out all his powers, covers all his history, continues over all his being, that must be a thing to make man wise, and happy, and noble, and safe, and satisfied. Let a man examine himself. There are these three conditions—in nature, in grace, in glory; or as it may be otherwise stated in self, in Christ, in Heaven; what is our standing before God? In the heavenly glory we all are not. Are we forgiven or unforgiven? Are we saved, or are we unsaved? Are we happy or miserable, in hope or in fear, in faith or in despair? Let a man not think of "a more convenient season." No season is unsuitable for these searching inquiries. No condition can dispense with these hard facts. No life can be well employed, if this great business be unheeded. What if we have heard and not understood; or understood and not believed; or believed and not trusted! What good can our religion have done for our souls? It can have given no peace; for no sealing of the Spirit comes down so low as to become

an earnest to such as are not heirs of God through Jesus. And what can the future have for us, if we have had no love to Jesus, because we have gone for no blessing to Him? How can there be praise, when there has never been appreciation, or admiration, or dedication to the Lord? The sinner's nature must make Heaven to be no home. Because grace has been ignored below glory could not be rendered above. And so he who will be proud must be poor; proud of self, and poor in self.

COLLECT.

"Search me, O Lord, and try my heart." I cannot deceive Thee, and I would not beguile myself. Show me what I am, where I am, and whose I am. Break my hard heart by the hammer of Thy word. Melt my cold soul, by the fiery fervour of Thy love. Quicken my dead conscience, by the life-giving influences of Thy Spirit. I desire to praise Thee, here in the world and in the flesh; hereafter in the Spirit and in Heaven. Suffer me not to linger where destruction threatens. Leave me not in the place to which my own sin has reduced me. Father, forgive me! My God, be gracious unto me. Oh! Holy One, accept me, and make me Thine only, always Thine. I ask all, in the name and for the sake of Jesus. Amen.



1 PET. ii. 11, 12.—" Dearly beloved, I beseech you, as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul; having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that whereas they speak against you as evil doers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation."

The Apostle reminds us that Christians may not escape, but should not deserve, an evil report among men. Men may speak evil against them as evil doers; but closer inspection and better knowledge may convert enemies into friends, if God's people be only true to God, true to themselves, and true to the world in which they live. An honest conversation will give men occasion to glorify God. It is, in itself, an honourable thing, for it tends to self-respect. And the secret of a right conversation is to be found in the healthy freedom of the soul. The things that war against it are not suffered to get the mastery over it, and because the soul is safe, the life will bear scrutiny. The Apostle, therefore, in his great love and interest towards his brethren, has beseechingly

pressed upon them this very wise advice-" Abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul." They are like an army, which may become mutinous and dangerous, if not under discipline and control. desires of the flesh are natural. Men must eat, and drink, and sleep, to live. They must not live to eat, and drink, and sleep. The body, in all its functions, is a part of the mechanism of a man; but it is the material part, which is to serve and not to subdue the spiritual. When the flesh shall war against the soul, the soul must assert its dominion over the flesh. Each man, who is honest in his desire to walk with God in the Spirit, can tell what is the thing which hinders That thing, be it what it may, must be subdued. It may be a thing of the body, or it may be a thing of the soul; for St. Paul includes mental things like envy, with carnal things like drunkenness, amongst the works of the flesh; but whatever it is, it must be put down and kept down by the servant of Jesus Christ. And this, for two reasons. The first reason Christians are in the is, that you are strangers. world, but not of it. It is useless to try to be happy and satisfied with these fleshly things. Christians have only a habitation and no citizenship amongst these carnal things. Therefore, because fleshly lusts cannot satisfy spiritual appetites, and because earthly homes were not intended to be permanent abodes for saints, we beseech you, as strangers, abstain from fleshly lusts.

The second is, that you are pilgrims. If this world cannot satisfy, another life must and will. Christian is on a pilgrimage, and though he may take the wayfaring man's rest he must continue his journey day by day. One day he may be in the valley and the mist, but in that he need not fear. Another day he may be in the sunshine, and on the heights; but there also he must not linger. The fleshly lusts would dull his spiritual enjoyments, and impede his heavenward walk. Link him to earth, and you make a nobler nature work as a slave at meaner work. Shut out his view of Heaven, and you bid him pine. and fret, and faint, as a bird that has wings but cannot soar. "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him."

COLLECT.

Most glorious God and Father in Christ, we desire to live to Thee. "Thy service is perfect freedom;" and Thy people can rejoice in Thee. Thou seest us in the world, and in the body, and we ask for grace and strength, that the freedom of our soul may be unbroken and unabridged. Help us to make our whole nature an instrument for Thy praise, and an evidence and illustration of Thy grace. Help us to bear in mind our birthright, as Thy children, and our responsibilities as Thy servants. Teach us to be keenly sensitive, and lovingly interested, about the

soul life of our fellow men. Enable us in life and in testimony to walk as becometh those who have been redeemed. Employ us, comfort us, sustain us, that we may be Thy true servants, whose profiting shall appear unto all men. We ask all in Christ's name. Amen.



Monday in Third Week after Easter.

EPHES. iii. 14-19.—" For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that he would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God."

THE whole family is yet neither in earth nor in Heaven. The part above now knows the "love of Christ which passeth knowledge;" and the part below desires to know it, endeavours to know it, and asks to know it, for "its length, breadth, depth and height," is the noblest, grandest, firmest possession,

which mind and heart and memory can enjoy. when the family needs, the only sure source of blessing will be its Father. But the Father is to be approached with reverence. "The throne of grace" implies that it is a throne, and on it sits the King; and yet it is of grace, and on it sits the Father. Therefore, every adoring child will say, "For this cause I bow my knees." The supplicant's very attitude will tell his sense of the Divine Majesty, before whom he prays. And yet the children come with a happy consciousness that the Father's hand is as open as the Father's heart. "The riches of His glory" is only the complement of "the riches of His grace." And when infinite power seconds infinite love, all the ingredients are there which inspire our confidence, and justify hope in God. The believer is a building and he is grounded in love—he rests lovingly on Jesus as the foundation of his soul's peace. The believer is a plant of grace, and he is rooted in love-he clings to Christ as that out of which all life, and growth, and fruitfulness must come. A man must be in Christ before he can draw anything out of Christ. And Christ must be in a man, "dwelling in the heart by faith," or he will never unfold His glory, His beauty, His sympathy, to the The thing, therefore, for which the Apostle prayed, was this: "That He would grant you, according to the riches of His grace, to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man."

seat of these divine operations must be the heart. The purport of them is to communicate strength. The manner of them is by the Holy Ghost. soul's firm hold upon Jesus is needful for its complete acquaintance with Him. And that hold comes only from spiritual strength which the Holy Ghost imparts. "Strengthened with might." No wonder that God's children are on their knees. They are like divers with a watery element all round, which, if once admitted, would drown the soul in worldly things. they have the atmosphere which the soul can breathe. supplied continuously from above. What need that the communion shall be kept complete! What wisdom to make everything give way before our intercourse with Heaven! The strength of a creature purpose, the power of a human will, the energy of a man's determination, are at best but feeble things. The real vigour is from the Holy Ghost. Spirit" is the only explanation of the life of God in the soul of man. The eyes are blind, till the Spirit The heart is dead, till the Spirit enlivens. enlightens. The conscience is enslaved, till the Spirit emancipates. The will is enfeebled, till the Spirit invigorates. "Walk in the Spirit," "live in the Spirit," "pray in Thus, and thus only, will you have the Spirit." strong faith to grasp Jesus. Thus, and thus only, will you have strong grace to receive out of His fulness, and to be satisfied with His love.

COLLECT.

Father of our Lord Jesus, we bow our knees before Thee. We desire to be filled with Thy fulness-to receive all that grace, and light, and strength which the Holy Ghost can give. We confess that we have not sought as Thou would have us seek; and therefore we have not found how deep, how rich, how true is Thy Fatherly love in Christ. We wish to open our hearts to Thee. We come now to surrender ourselves to Thee. Look not on our sins and shortcomings, for we are ashamed for such before Thee. But look upon Jesus-look upon the blood-look upon the covenant; and accept us who now plead before Thee, what Thy dear Son has done for us. Help us to see, help us to feel, help us to enjoy, help us to experience; so shall we reflect Thy glory, and show forth all Thy praise. Father, forgive us. Father, receive us. Father, help us. For Jesus' sake. Amen.



Tuesday in Third Week after Easter.

Luke xv. 21-24—" And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against Heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son. But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on

him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: and bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat and be merry: for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found."

THE prodigal could not have said less, and he was not permitted to say more. He intended to say, "Make me as one of thy hired servants;" but his father's ready, loving welcome gave him no opportunity to say that. Oh, that sinners knew how warmly their Father loves! The Devil deceives by the suggestion that the sinner is too vile, and God is too stern; and so the one who has is kept distant from the one who needs. And the Gospel is the heavenly message to disabuse man, and to represent God. If men would only think, they would embrace this Gospel as the happiest message that ever came to The story of the prodigal son has a pathos in it which stirs the heart. If it had no deeper spiritual meaning, we should be affected by the despairing misery of the homeless son, and we should rejoice over the glowing gratitude of the thankful father. But it is a parable as well as a history. upon higher things than earthly sorrows and joys. tells us what sinners find in sin, and what they may find in forgiveness. There is a moral insanity in a sinner's alienation from God. It was a wild folly which drove him from his home to find happiness in His boasted independence was that which left him a poor slave under a hard and cruel service. The

things could not continue "when he came to himself." One memory made all clear. "How many hired servants of my father have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger. I will arise and go to my father." Thank God, if such a ray of light should have fallen on any man's soul. But the entrance of the light must rouse to immediate action. He said, I will arise; and immediately he arose and Difficulties were nothing. Distances were nothing. Doubts were nothing. There was the agony of the distress—there was the recollection of the old home love. He came to his father, and he said. "Father, I have sinned." The prodigal could open his heart, because he knew his father. sinner can confess his sin, because he remembers that he is before his God. And what a reception that is which the penitent meets with. Recognition of sonship is, in itself, a joy. To be near the Father will alone delight any man who has been under the terrible tyranny of the devil and of sin. But think of all the comforts of the home. The ring, the best robe, the shoes for the weary feet. Then the richness of the supply of all that can please and profit. The fatted calf—the father's feast. Who cannot transfer the thoughts to the higher things which God gives to such as return to Him! There is joy in Heaven, joy among the angels, over one sinner that repenteth. "This my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found." "It is meet that we should make

merry and be glad." Here is the beckoning of mercy which misery still may see. In this is the welcome of grace, which the outcasts yet may hear. Who will not arise and go? Who will not return and say, Father, I have sinned? Who that ever came home again to all these soul joys will not tell to all who misapprehend Jesus, what a friend, what a loving friend He is?

COLLECT.

Almighty God, we have erred and strayed from Thy ways like lost sheep. We have gone away from Thy love, and have found shame and sorrow in sin. We have sinned against Heaven and before Thee. We now return in penitence and prayer. We now desire to be accepted in the beloved. Thy home of love is what we are longing to enjoy. Thy service of grace is that to which we mean to be devoted. Be pleased to take us nearer to Thee. Be willing to do for us above all that we ask or think. We trust in Thy love. We cast ourselves upon Thy compassion. Father, be gracious unto us, and we shall live. us for Christ's sake. Amen.



Wednesduy in Third Week after Easter.

Luke xvi. 8-10.—" The children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light. And I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends of the Mammon of unrighteousness; that, when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations."

THE children of this world are wiser, not in the object they choose, but in the intelligence with which they They throw their heart into the earthly pursue it. They put their mind to carrying out enterprise. the purposes of the life which they have entered. The children of light are lingering on a road which leads to glory. The children of the world are hastening on a way which must end in ruin. The old path, and a fresh stimulus—the right object, and the more vigorous pursuit—these are the things which are needed, and seem to be recommended here. great matter is faithfulness. Whether it be little or much that the Master has entrusted to us, let us be faithful, remembering the account we must one day give, and considering the object for which we have been called and trusted. Now, the "Mammon of unrighteousness," what the unrighteous has and values as his chief good, is also a thing which the righteous too may use. Whether it be wealth, or station, or influence, or abilities, or opportunities, we have them that we may make them our friends. Not that they

may grow into our masters. Not that they become Not that they may prove our snares, our our idols. temptations, our hindrances on our way to Heaven. By using, and not abusing: by employing for God, and not putting them in God's place, we may make our profit out of earthly things. They become enemies when they are so placed as to shut out God. The man who is wise will remember that the day must The sinner's clutching hand come when he shall fail. will lose its power to grasp. The sinner's narrow heart will fail in its ability to contract. The sinner's selfish eve will have no more power to glare in envy or gloat in guilty love. And the saint also knows that he may not, would not, always stay among the things he has gathered here. He is moving down a swift stream; and things which please, or things which perplex, must equally be passed and left behind. But "they may receive you"-you may be, and should seek to be, "received into everlasting habitations." It is for the brighter home that the believer is most busily pre-The things of earth are his, but by these things he is labouring for the honour of his Master, and the good of all his brethren. Admission into Heaven is only because of the merits of Jesus Christ. Because a man has laid his own unrighteousness at the Cross of Christ, and put on there the pure linen which has become a robe washed white in the blood, therefore he has admission into the everlasting habitations. But out of the salvation which is by grace

and through the blood, there will come the consecration which is for Jesus and His truth, and cause, and people. Surrender the heart to Jesus, and all the possessions will follow, as the Lord has need of them. Oh, that men were as earnest in godliness as the sinner is in sin! Oh, that believers were as much given to Christ as unbelievers are given to the world! The children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light. Shame that it should be Stir, that it may be so no longer. Consecration of self, of time, of effort, of every talent and pound which God has given—all with an eye to God's glory, all with the memory that flesh is failing, all with the thought that the everlasting habitations are preparing —this should be the saved man's wisdom, this will be the wise man's service.

COLLECT.

Oh! our God, in whom we live, and move, and have our being, grant us the spirit of wisdom, to choose that good part, and to press toward the mark for the prize of our high calling. Fill us with a holy zeal; fit us for a consistent pursuit of that which is true, and right, and good, and safe, and suitable. Give us the upward look of a realizing faith in Jesus. Give us the forward tension of an ever quickening running after the things which Jesus gives. Make us fervent in spirit, bold in effort, humble in prayer, resolute in courage, single-hearted in desire. May

Thy grace enable us to say, "To me to live is Christ." Bless us, oh! our Father, for His sake. Amen.



Thursday in Third Week after Easter.

EPHES. v. 25-27.—" Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it; that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word: that he might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish."

THE church is the body of Christ, the bride of Christ, the building of Christ. It is the flock which Jesus owns, the family which Jesus loves, the army which Jesus leads. It is to be presented by Jesus to Himself a glorious church, perfect in all its parts, complete in all its organizations, beautiful as a king's daughter, holy and without blemish as an acceptable offering. Upon it will be no stain, no spot to tell of sin. On it will be seen no sign of weakness, no wrinkle to tell it can be no more young. "Christ loved the church, and gave Himself for it, that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word." It was a pitiful object once. It lay amidst the ruins of its own glory. It was turned into an enemy against

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God, and a sport in the Devil's hand. A sad story is that which tells what sinners were when Jesus loved them. But He gave Himself for them, and they were redeemed. The preciousness of the blood represents the value of the redeemed. "Corruptible things, as silver and gold," were of no value in this transaction for the ransom of human souls. Some price was to be found, but in no created thing could it be seen. Therefore, Jesus gave Himself. This is the mystery of mercy. Herein is the sublimity of love.

But the church redeemed was for a holy purpose, "that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water." Every vessel for spiritual use must be wholly purged from corruption. They who are God's must be godly. And such as are saved are sanctified. It could not be otherwise, if God were to maintain His condemnation of sin. He will spare the sinner; He will not sanction his sin. The Gospel is according to godliness.

And what is the process of the cleansing? It is "by the word." It was thus that the Redeemer prayed, "Sanctify them through Thy truth; Thy word is truth." Yet it is the blood that cleanseth. But the word directs us to the blood. It is the Spirit that quickeneth; yet the word has told us about the Spirit. "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." And so we see how the plan of grace is perfected. The word of Christ comes as a sunbeam into the secrets of the heart, and men be-

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hold the sins. Their numbers startle, their enormity shocks, their filthiness alarms. The sinner can no more be content in sin. It haunts him, horrifies him, humbles him. So the word pierces like a two-edged sword, conscience is wounded, and the heart opened and made sore. But the same word leads to Jesus. It tells of His cleansing blood. It speaks of His saving grace. It reminds of His power to support, strengthen, and separate, for the holier, happier service. At the invitation of mercy, the slave crawls away from his dungeon. At the bidding of love, the leper throws away his filthy rags. At the beckoning of grace, the heart takes hold of the purer joys. all is elevated, enriched, enlarged, refined, purged, and fitted for the Master's service. The church rises into the atmosphere of holiness-walks amongst the upper interests of Heaven. And so it waits. He shall "present it unto Himself, a glorious church." Who would not be Christ's-object of His love, subject of His grace, sharer of His heart, His honour, in the life over which no death can come!

COLLECT.

Almighty Father, whose purposes are all in love, and whose word is always true, we thank Thee, and glorify Thee, because of what Thou art. "The eternal God is my refuge; and underneath are the everlasting arms." Because Thou upholdest, Thy people are safe. Because Thou providest, they are

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Because Thou protectest, they are kept. hope is in Thee. 'Our desires are towards Thee. Our perfection is to be with Thee. We ask to be sanctified for Thy service. We ask to be cleansed by Thy grace. Because Thou hast given much, we praise. Because Thou wilt give yet more, we pray. hear us for Christ's sake. Amen.



Friday in Third Weck after Easter.

EPHES. vi. 14-18.—" Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God: praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit."

THE Christian must stand where the fiery darts fall He cannot escape the warfare. whole armour of God" protects him, and he can stand without fear. But while he stands he prays. All prayer and supplication in the Spirit is that by which he holds communion with the Captain of his Salvation, and receives the guidance, and comfort, 80

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and encouragement which the circumstances of his warfare need. And while he stands he fights. sword of the Spirit is his weapon, and he thrusts it into the heart of every falsehood, and flashes it in the face of every foe. And the shield of faith is his protection; and when doubts and difficulties assault his soul, he turns against them some testimony of God, some argument of experience, and because he trusts his Master he resists his enemy. And the account given will explain where the Christian's danger lies. There is the region of a man's passions, and we read "having your loins girt about with truth." No man will follow the carnal desires of the flesh, if he has God's truth checking him by showing how they war against the soul. There is the region of the affections; and so we have "the breastplate of righteousness," because a justified person by his love for the higher things in Jesus, is delivered from the love of the lower things in the world, and the flesh, and the creature. There is the region of the will, and therefore we are told of the "feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace." tected as to his walk, the Christian would stumble, for the path is rough, strewn with the enemy's snares, and sharp devices to make men fall. But the believer's feet are shod. Gospel peace enables him to tread down the things which wound others at every step. He has no falterings, because, by God's help, he has no fears. There is, besides, the region of the IV. G

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understanding; and for that "the helmet of salvation" is the protection which God has given. The Christian may be assaulted by many specious objections against the truth. Salvation enjoyed is its own most weighty argument. The possibility which is denied is proved by the fact that the thing denied is done. And so the Christian stands. armour of light" reminds us that light is armour. Darkness cannot reach the soul that is in light. so, as a man's knowledge of Jesus and His truth is clearer, deeper, fuller, real and realized, he has a firmer standing and a bolder bearing. He resists, and the devil flees. It is this holy boldness which is needed in an evil day. The enemy is pressing every point, and bringing forward every appliance of war to startle and harass the Lord's people. forget that his safety is in the whole armour of God. Let no man forget that he who is not wounded is the man who can face the foe. There is no security in flight. There is no strength in carnal weapons. There must be no resting on an arm of flesh. Behind God's shield, with the heavenly mail upon him, the Christian will be more than conqueror. fighting, trusting, thus the warrior stands; and all the fiery darts of the wicked lie broken, quenched, and harmless at his feet.

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COLLECT.

O Lord of Hosts, who goest before Thy people, we desire to follow Thee without fainting and without fear. If Thou be for us, who shall be against us? We remember how Thy saints have triumphed in olden Help us, Thou God of our salvation. wrestle against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Lord, be Thou our defence and shield. We realize Thy presence. We call to mind Thy promises. We throw ourselves upon Thy protection. We have real faith, both in Thy willingness and power to save. Increase our faith: enlarge our love. Give fervour and sincerity in our prayers. So shall we contend for thee, and triumph through Thee, and they who see us stand will praise Thee. Hear us in these our prayers, for Thy dear Son's sake. Amen.



Suturday in Third Week after Easter.

I SAMUEL XV. 13-16.—"And Samuel came to Saul; and Saul said unto him, Blessed be thou of the Lord: I have performed the commandment of the Lord. And Samuel said, What meaneth then this bleating of the sheep

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in mine ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear?
And Saul said, They have brought them from the Amalekiles: for the people spared the best of the sheep and of
the oxen to sacrifice unto the Lord thy God; and the rest
they have utterly destroyed. Then Samuel said unto
Saul, Stay, and I will tell thee what the Lord hath said
to me this night."

"To obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams." But as to what is obedience. the Lord, and not man only, must be judge. the matter of obeying, duty cannot be shifted from one man's shoulders to another's. To his own master. each must stand or fall. Saul had not obeyed, and yet he greeted Samuel as if he had. Because he had done part, he claimed to have done all. And because what was left undone, had to be so left by the people. he supposed that blame rested not with him but them. It is so still in the matter of many a man's service before God. He flatters himself, and persuades others. that he is doing his duty. But facts tell a different tale. There are blatant sins; only, the self-complacent ear fails to understand their language. But God hears all; and when a sinner has spoken peace to himself, and spoken untruth to his neighbour, he has yet to reckon with his God. So, too, when the fact of sin has been made clear, the fault of sin will be brought home to him who is indeed to blame. compelled to disobey. He may be tempted, and urged, and persuaded; but sin is each man's personal

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offence, deliberate choice between the evil and the good. Saul had the power to control his servants. and to obey the orders of his God. And men cannot plead that they are exempted, because another has been associated in some rebellion against the Lord. And the gauge of obedience is God's command. man is justified in sitting in judgment on the law. God only is responsible for that; man is responsible for the obedience. All the creature's arguments, all the creature's agreements, cannot abrogate the law. Opinions may fluctuate, but the command continues. Fashions of thought may vary, but the standard is always true. We must obey God, and not man. And we know God's commandments only from God's There we have God's mind, God's provisions, God's will. To obey, therefore, we must be familiar with the written word. In it we "hear a voice behind us saying, This is the way, walk ye in it." "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path." "Through Thy precepts I get understanding: therefore I hate every false way." He will seek to be guided in all he does, not by the prevailing sentiments, or the current opinions of men, and not by the fancies or feelings which may be uppermost in his own heart and will, but by that which is written in the "How readest thou?" is the question he will often put to his soul. Oh, for a plastic nature, to be moulded by the Lord's own hand. Oh! for a pliant spirit, to be bent for the Lord's own purpose.

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for a ductile heart, to be drawn out by the Lord's own love. "If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land. But, if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword, for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it."

COLLECT.

Oh! our God, "Thou sittest upon the throne, judging right." "The law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good." We believe in Thy wisdom. We acknowledge Thy authority. We love Thy law. Pardon the iniquity of Thy servants. Put Thy spirit within us that we may be doing Thy will from the heart. We have sinned and come short of Thy glory; but we do not desire to resist or to rebel. Teach us to serve Thee with reverence and godly We plead the atonement made by Jesus. present ourselves at Thy footstool in our precious Saviour's name. But the desire of our heart, and the purport of our prayers shall be, that we may be confirmed unto the image of Thy son. Lord, make us Thine own—ever, everywhere Thine own. So shall we live and praise Thy name. Hear us for Jesus' sake. Amen.





Fourth Sunday after Easter.

JAMES i. 23-25.—" If any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: for he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed."

The Apostle James, though the most practical, is the most poetical of the New Testament writers. He is at once a man of wisdom and a man of taste. He tells us that the Gospel is "a perfect law of liberty." The liberty is from the bondage of Satan; and the law is under the direction of Christ. It will tell a man much as to what he is, for it is a glass in which his natural face may be seen, if he will stop and look. But looking is not all, and hearing is not all. He who looks so as to understand, must continue to look. Like the cherubim turning their faces towards the mercy seat; and like the angels desiring to understand the mystery of mercy; anxious sinners must

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pore over the testimony which the word has given about sin and the great salvation. So also, he who hears, must not be a forgetful hearer. The truth, as it is in Jesus, was given to make men wise unto salvation; and it must be understood and then acted on, if it is to have any saving power. Every degree of knowledge should be transformed into an experience. Every addition of light should be used for labour. "Not a forgetful hearer" of the word, "but a doer of the work," comes up to the apostolic ideal of what a Christian ought to be. "This man shall be blessed in his deed." The doing is in itself a blessing. man holds himself in connection with higher subjects of knowledge, and he is happy in that. He is engaged in a nobler character of service, saving souls, serving God, subduing self, exercising faith, learning patience, watching how God works for the good of His servants, and the carrying out of His purposes. influenced by happier motives, sustained by higher principles, recipient of richer grace, and so in the very doing he finds a blessing. And on the deed so done, the Lord will pour out His blessing. can serve God without being conscious that God is no man's debtor. There is the pleasure of a contented mind, when a man feels that he is what God would have him be. There is the pleasure of a felt success, when the Lord has owned his labours, and a man finds it good to be amongst the manifestations of God's own grace and power. The Apostle recommends

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study—looking, hearing, doing in regard to the word of God. But while men hear they must also speak. The treasures of wisdom and knowledge were not to be hoarded bullion, but current coin, circulating amongst men, that they may be richer both in mind and heart.

COLLECT.

God of our salvation, hear. Thy light has gone forth over this dark world; grant that its rays may fall upon our dark hearts. Thou only canst truly show us what we are. Thou only canst fully tell us what we are to be. There is liberty under Thy law. And Thy law is perfect. Open our eyes that we may see, and unstop our ears that we may hear what Thy purposes of love towards us have been. Give us a right understanding. Give us a practical wisdom. For "this is life eternal, to know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent." Help us to know, and do Thy will, for Christ's sake. Amen.



Monday in Fourth Week after Easter.

PHIL. iii. 8, 9.—" I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do

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count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in Him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith."

THE knowledge of Christ excels all other knowledge, just as Christ Himself exceeds all others in glory. Place all worldly good in contrast with Jesus, and enlightened love has no difficulty in counting all things but loss for Him. And the possession of Christ helps a man to bear whatever loss the deciding for Christ may bring. Paul was poorer in earthly things, but richer in spiritual things, after he had found the Faith is a winning of Christ, a reaching up to Him, taking hold upon Him, climbing up into Him, as into the cleft of a rock, and the protection of a fortress, and the peace of an abiding rest. man is found in law, in self, in the rags of a creaturerighteousness, he will be found in a false position, found in a defenceless situation, found in an unrecognized garb. Only when found in Christ can any man be safe. And a man is in Christ only by faith. nature he is in condemnation. As to his own merit or power, he is under bondage, under disgrace, under curse. But a man in Christ, whose name is written in the Lamb's book of life, whose person is joined to Jesus as one whom He has purchased and changed he is accepted in the Beloved. The righteousness of God-that which God has provided, that which God will recognize, that which God accepts—is per-

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fect as a covering for the soul, complete as an apparel in the family. Jesus accepted death that He might communicate life. 'He met Satan that He might emancipate man. He bare our sins that we might share His glory. He carried our sorrows, that He might shed abroad His consolations. To stand in a man's own righteousness, is to make a mockery of God, and a sport of Jesus. To reckon upon security from law, is to vindicate and encourage lawlessness; because it is to put off the lawgiver with less than the law requires. If we are to be reckoned with on the terms of obedience, we must prove that we have never sinned. If we are to be dealt with on the ground of grace, we have to take what God offers, on God's own conditions of gift and graciousness. No good life can ever come out of an erroneous creed. man who has renounced self and embraced Christ will never be content to remain in an unholy service. Thus out of the faith comes the obedience; and they who love Jesus so much delight in Him and His service, that they count all things but loss, in contrast with the gain of knowing Him. What have we ever sacrificed for Christ? What have we thrown away, to lay fast hold on Him? The choice implies a consciousness of choosing; and what has our election come to? Found in Him—as a branch in a vine, a lamb in a sheep-fold, a child in a family, a limb in a body what are we, what have we, what expect we in Him?

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COLLECT.

Merciful Father, who in love to our souls hast sent Thy dear Son to die for our sins, we think of the riches of Thy grace till our hearts are lost in wonder. There was no beauty in us to attract; for we had become degraded and defiled by sin. The spring of Thy mercy was in Thine own large heart of love. And we, Thy servants, are longing to sin no more. Show us the beauty of holiness. Convince us of the privilege of service. Help us to understand the honour of being called by Thy name. We come to ask for grace. We come to enter into peace. We come to be lifted up into light. Make us to forsake all for Christ. Grant us what Thou knowest to be for good, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.



Tuesday in Sourth Week after Easter.

PHIL. iv. 6, 7.—" Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your request be made known unto God: and the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."

Anxious care cannot exist in the presence of two things. Thanksgiving must dissipate it; because

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memory then tells how gracious God has been. supplication will scatter it; because in God's promised presence for the future, there can be no real or reasonable ground for murmuring or despair. If a man's requests may be made known unto God in everything, and if a man's experience cannot separate God's love from anything, therefore it is but the inference of a sanctified common sense to say, "Be careful for nothing." And a like conclusion is marked by a second course of argument. The peace of God is the antagonist of the anxiety of man. The latter disturbs both mind and heart; and it does so by causing the careful to seek comfort through self, or man, or earth. prayer conducts into peace. And the peace of God "passeth all understanding." Thus to "enter into peace" becomes a matter of experiment and experience, and not a thing of speculation and argument. So long as a sinner trembles because he cannot believe God's mercy, he will have no peace. long as a sceptic tries to prove that God should not be, and cannot be gracious, he will have no peace. It passeth understanding, as not being the device of the creature, but the provision and offer of the Crea-But it does so also, because acquaintance with God's peace will never exhaust it. The joy is deeper than the human heart. The privilege is fuller than the human need. Therefore it will keep, protect, satisfy both hearts and minds through Jesus Christ. It was Christ's intention that it should be so.

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of Christ's grace and sympathy that it must be so. Think of a heart filled with the love of God. carefulness, in the form of anxiety, need be in that! "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" This is the logic of love, the philosophy of faith, the language of hope and joy. Think of a mind filled with the thought of God. The home of God is immensity; the lifetime of God is eternity; and "this God is our God for ever and ever." What heights of heavenly wisdom, what depths of everlasting truth, what expanse of extending experience must come out of thoughts like these! The God of the great is the God of the most minute. The God of the grand design is the God of the smallest detail. "Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord, or who hath been His counsellor?" What originated in His mercy will be perfected by His might; and "if God be for us, who can be against us?" "Be careful for nothing."

COLLECT.

All-seeing and all-searching God, we "cast our care upon Thee, because Thou carest for us." We cannot make a hair of our head white or black; but

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all are numbered unto Thee. Thou feedest the young ravens that call upon Thee. And we can rest in Thy love. Lord, give us caution, but not care. Give us courage, but not care. Give us trust, and not care. We have enemies all around, and infirmities all within; but Thy protecting arm and Thy sustaining grace will keep both mind and heart through Jesus Christ. Enable us to praise Thee that it has been so with others. Teach us to pray that it may ever be so with us. All this we ask through Jesus Christ. Amen.



Wednesday in Fourth Week after Easter.

LUKE xx. 17, 18.—" He beheld them, and said, What is this then that is written, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner? Whosoever shall fall upon that stone shall be broken; but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder."

God makes no mistakes. Man has made, and will make, many. The builders may reject the cornerstone, but it is chosen of God and precious. If it were not true that God is faithful, how could His temple stand? And if it be true that God's work must prosper, then it must be highly important that

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men should not even seem to fight against God. Now, they who reject Christ are represented here as coming under a two-fold mischief. "Whosoever shall fall upon that stone shall be broken." That fall will always be hurtful, but it may not always be fatal. the pride of his power, with a contemptuous idea of his own prudence, a sinner may look above the stone of stumbling and may be humbled by a fall. But he may rise again, and stand upon the foundation which he had overlooked. This is the precious opportunity of this Gospel day. This is the blessed result of the long-suffering of our God, who now, everywhere, calleth sinners to repentance. Yet falls are dangerous things, and to trifle with Christ's offered salvation is to run the terrible risk of seeking when we may not find, because we refused to seek when the Lord called. But the final mistake will be discovered when the stone shall fall upon the sinner. Jesus now comes in mercy: but what must follow the Lamb's wrath? His coming in grace to His people will be followed up by His coming in glory; and then He who was the cornerstone to support, will be the top-stone to complete the building. But His coming as an ambassador to His enemies will be succeeded by His coming as a The golden sceptre of His mercy will then become the hammer of His indignation. And the stone over which folly stumbled will be the stone under which hope and happiness will be crushed. is well to keep in mind this two-fold coming, and this

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double action of the Lord. There is only evil now for a sinner who forsakes Christ; but it is evil that is little cared for, evil which appears even with some pretences to be good. At this present time men who stumble at the word, being disobedient, are applauded by others, and boastful about themselves. The effect of unbelief is not fully remembered here. But in the day when sinners shall wake up with their unpardoned sins, in the world where the scorners shall meet Jesus face to face, one only consequence can follow. Utterly ashamed, entirely self-condemned, they will be broken as to hopes, and crushed under by fears, the past a picture of remorse, and the future a prospect of despair. Oh! that men may find Jesus in faith before He finds them in wrath.

COLLECT.

Oh, Lord Jesus Christ, we desire to put trust in Thee. We have rested too long on self, and followed too far after sin. We have found nothing solid, nothing saving, nothing suitable in the way which led us away from Thee. The floods will rise, and we desire to stand safe upon a rock. The day of account is coming, and we long to be found in Thee. Deliver us from stumbling at Thy name, Thy work, Thy service. Teach us to remember the day of Thy visitation. Bid us so to cleave to Thee that when Thou

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shalt come in Thy glory we may be comforted, and not crushed before Thee. Be with us, plead for us, come unto us, for Thy name's sake. Amen.



Thursday in Sourth Week after Guster.

COL. iii. 1-4.—" If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory."

"Christ sitteth on the right hand of God." Stephen saw Him there; and "blessed is he that hath not seen, and yet hath believed." "Christ, who is our life, shall appear." Happy shall they be who shall "also appear with Him in glory." And all such are dead, and yet they are risen. Christ is their life, and yet their life is hid with Christ in God. There is, in fact, an analogy and resemblance between Christ and all His true people. He was once alive upon earth, and they, in their earliest stage, were living for earth, on earth, without any true sense of anything better than earthly things. Then sin revived and the sinner found himself to be dead. He was dead to hope,

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dead to pleasure—one great horror of darkness came. and he died. Then came resurrection life. Christ, and with Christ, the believing soul arose. Into a new world, for a new purpose, by a new energy, the believer passed from death unto life. And after an earthly career, following Christ, the servant will ascend like the Master, and life in all its fulness, all its perfectness, will be reached in Heaven. glorious prospect which influences the believer here. "If ye be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above." "Set your affection on things above." The life will be according to the affections. "this present evil world," and you will forsake Christ. Love the better things of glory, and you will cleave to Jesus, who only admits you to them. Here, then, The true Christian will be given to heavenly meditation. He will sit much with Jesus in heavenly places. He will get away into solitudes to be alone with Jesus. He will go forth into multitudes, that we may bear witness to Jesus, and tell how He passeth by to heal and bless. He sits loosely to the world, and he rises easily towards Heaven. is as one dead to sins. He has lost his taste for evil; and he says, "The life that I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me." Now, all this implies change. When a dead man lives, the change is entire -a complete passing from world to world. When a living man rises, the change is not entire—it is only

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passing from twilight to noon-day, from partial to perfect knowledge, from the lower to the upper apartments, from the outer into the inner courts of God's great House and Temple. "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of heaven." It is this first step, this initiatory expression, which it is so needful for men to inquire about. Are we "alive toward God?" all the earnest-hearted ought to ask. Have we risen with Jesus? Are we walking with Jesus? Do we long and watch and wait for Jesus? These are the urgent questions which wise men must examine.

COLLECT.

Lord, Thou hast ascended up on High. us, hast entered into the Heaven of heavens. ever livest to make intercession for us. Our life is hid We commit our souls unto Thee. with Thee. Thou hast rescued us from death, Thou canst preserve us unto life eternal. We do not look back on our past for comfort; for we have sinned. We cannot look in upon ourselves for strength; for we have often proved our weakness. We look to Thee. Thou who hast redeemed us, wilt also rescue us. Lord, save our souls. Lord, direct our steps. raise our thoughts. Lord, ripen our acquaintance with Thyself and Thy great salvation. Hear us. blessed Saviour, for Thy own sake. Amen.

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LUKE xxi. 34-36.—" Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares. For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man."

THINGS that hinder, things that help, things that encourage the Christian in his course, such things are stated here; and the consequences involved are proved to be most important. There are sad things which shall come to pass upon the world of the ungodly; there are glorious things yet to be revealed to the family of faith and love; and all these things are connected with the day of the Lord's appearing. That day will come as a snare—come as a flash come as a thief in the night; and the thing which mainly hinders expectation and preparation, is a "heart overcharged." Men who are giving themselves to enjoy the things of the flesh, will not find themselves given to desire the things of the kingdom. "Surfeiting and drunkenness, and the cares of this life," may be common amongst men. They may be justified as doing no harm; they may be defended as

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giving some pleasure in a world in which many sorrows are to be found: but the fact remains, that such things have been forbidden. The history continues that they will cause the day of the Lord to come unawares. The effects are seen; they leave men in a situation where they will not escape these things that shall come to pass.

Then, there are things which help. "Take heed to yourselves." "See that ye walk circumspectly. Have a holy caution: a wise preparation: be ye ready." "Watch ye," therefore, "and pray always." Watch unto prayer, that you may put up the right petitions, in the true spirit, through the right channel, before the right throne. Watch, after prayer, to see God's hand, to bide God's time, to accept God's answers, to acknowledge God's blessings.

So, also, there are things which encourage. You "may be accounted worthy to escape all these things." What cause for a holy gratitude! Oh, how unworthy once! and whence so worthy now? All is from Jesus, and so all will be for Jesus. Think of the preciousness of His blood which cleanseth. Think of the presence of His grace which calleth. Think of the fulness of His power which changeth all who are found worthy. "To stand before the Son of man!" What encouragement in such a hope! It is like an anchor to the soul; and when the tide of evil runs swiftest, and the storms of opposition flow fiercest, this blessed hope holds the heart steady, and

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keeps the whole soul safe. These are no speculations or dreams of man. The facts are known, because God has spoken; they are to be expected, because God has ordained them. The present calm cannot continue; the sleep of folly and of indifference must be disturbed; the trump of the Archangel and the voice of God will wake the dead and summon all that live, and the evil and the good will both prove real things. "Take heed," take care, take counsel, take measures of safety, take God's own word, "so that day shall not come upon you unprepared."

COLLECT.

O Thou glorious God, King of kings, and Lord of lords! Thou hast not forsaken Thy throne, Thou hast not laid aside Thy power. We believe that Thou hast appointed a day in which Thou will judge the world. We would not leave off from pleading for Thy grace. We are not weary of presenting ourselves before Thy footstool. Teach us, enable us, to keep under the body. Help us to watch and pray. Thou hast large blessings to give; we have many blessings to ask. We come to Thee, through Thy dear Son's name. Thou canst meet us through our dear Lord's mediation. Make us to know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast This is life eternal. Give us this great blessing for Thine own sake. Amen.

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ST. PHILIP AND ST. JAMES'S DAY.

JOHN i. 43-45—" The day following Jesus would go forth into Galilee, and findeth Philip, and saith unto him, Follow me. Now Philip was of Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. Philip findeth Nathanael and saith unto him, We have found Him of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph."

THE chain of history in Christ's Church is a linked series of effort and of influences, by which man is bound to man in love, and all are bound to Jesus by faith. The whole originates in Christ's own call; and in every case they who have found and followed Jesus, bring others also to Him. The people were expecting Him "of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write;" but they were looking in a wrong direction, and they despised Him whom the disciples had found, because they said, "Can any good thing come out of Galilee?" "Search and look, for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet." They had been mistaken as to the fact, for Jesus did not come out of Galilee. He came out of Nazareth, from whence the Messiah was to come. How small 104

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an error will corrupt a man's calculation! And how soon a man is guided right when he hears the Lord's own call, "Follow me." It was in despised Galilee that His early signs and wonders were done. in Galilee that His holy walk and wondrous words were known. It was into Galilee that He bid His followers go, when they were to forsake all for Him. Any place is honoured in which Iesus abides. becomes a land of light when He shines,—a land of liberty, because He rules. In the home, in the heart, there is ever joy when the Lord is known. honoured names are associated here with the dear Lord Jesus! Andrew and Peter, and Philip and Nathanael are heroes in the history of the Church; and to be united to such a brotherhood, to stand in the army in which such men fought and conquered is an honour, and will be an honour to the end of time. But all finders are also searchers in the economy of Christ; because the treasure is so rich, the food so abundant, the grace so free, the hope so large, therefore jealousy and envy droop and die. They who are happy in salvation must bring others to enjoy what they possess. The water of life would stagnate if it did not flow on like a river, to circulate where plants of grace can grow. The aspect of the Church and of the individual soul is sure to be sombre and dull, if the light of God's truth be absorbed and not "Freely ye have received, freely give," is a principle which runs through the whole course and

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career of godly men. A man may, therefore, estimate his religion by its tendency to expand or contract. It cannot be healthy if it closes only round his own little selfish schemes. It is proved to be a call from Jesus mainly because it has become an echo for Jesus. Each man who knows Christ should make Christ known; there should be vitality and fruitfulness in every section of the living Church. The grace which comes originally from Jesus will tingle to the extremity of the body, and the world will understand that all God's people are alive for God and good.

COLLECT.

O Thou head of the living body the Church, we pray that new vigour of life may appear in all Thy people! Send forth Thy light and Thy grace, that they may shine over this dark world. Raise up, we pray Thee, Thy power, and come among us, and with great might succour us. The world lieth in the wicked one; and the Church has too long been asleep in carelessness. Let Thy voice be heard, stirring all who know Thee, and calling all who know Thee not. Take away whatever may hinder us from godly union and concord; and give to Thy servants the holy emulation of Christian love, and the higher ambition of guiding souls to Jesus. Lord, hear our prayer, for Christ our Saviour's sake. Amen.



COLOS. iv. 5, 6.—" Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time. Let your speech be alway with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man."

THE Christian's walk, and the Christian's words, are connected here with the influence of his character, and the force of his arguments. He must walk in wisdom. Not only in a wise course, but wisely in the course which he has chosen. He is a public representative of Christ; and for his Master's sake, as well as his own, he must "walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise." The outer world is affected by a man's character, even before it will listen to his testimony. And the servant of Jesus Christ must not only ask what is lawful, but what is expedient, that he may give none offence, "neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the Church of Christ." Now, one mark of wisdom is a right use of time. The Christian connects it with eternity, considers it the spring

of a glorious opportunity, during which seeds of holy truth are sown, which shall yield a harvest to be reaped in Heaven. But if they who are without shall see the professing people of Christ, reckless in throwing opportunity away, how can they believe them to be sincere? And another mark of holy wisdom, is a careful consideration of every step to be taken in the way towards God and glory. "Walk in wisdom," implies a holy caution that our footsteps do not stumble, and are not turned aside. The word is a lamp which the careful ever use. The Gospel of peace is a protection which the foot of faith is glad to wear. Walk warily, walk actively, for the time is short.

And, then, as to the Christian's words, "Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt." Words should be very pure. The corruption of an unworthy motive; of an unworthy concealment of sanctifying truth, or a cowardly insinuation of a defiling error, will make profession an abomination both before God and man. Plain, clear, distinct, decided, should be a true man's utterance, of the truth as it is in Jesus. The simple message which God Himself has given must be simply given. And words should also be very kind. "Always with grace;" always in love; is the truth to be made known. The graciousness of a tender tone; the gracefulness of a loving patience; the grace of a conspicuous unselfishness; such things will commend the truth we love to teach.

There must be humanity as well as Christianity in our appeal. The brother in the Lord must let it be felt that in sympathy, in real interest, he is a brother in the flesh, seeking to do men good. Thus will a Christian know how he ought to answer every man. Men will argue against him. Men may ask a reason of the hope that is in him; and the Christian is glad when men begin to inquire. He will answer that he only recommends what he himself enjoys. He will explain, that he urges salvation, only because God has brought it home in power to his own soul. will appeal to the fact that religion has wrought in his own character, and the result has been love instead of selfishness, peace instead of anxiety. And they who are without will recognize the fact of a change, and accept the truth which has made their brother free.

COLLECT.

Almighty God, who hast called out a people for Thy praise, and art building up Thy Church for Thy greater glory, we pray Thee to fill Thy servants with Thine own spirit of truth, and grace, and love. Give them holy thoughts, holy words, and a holy and consistent walk. Make them to be very observant of Thy divine requirements, and also very regardful of all that they who are within and without Thy Church, may expect Thy servants to be. Teach us all to be

as a city set on a hill, conspicuous for consecration to Thee. Make us all to be as a candle shining in the house, influencing for good such as watch us day by day. Be gracious to Thy servants, ever gracious Father, and we will serve Thee in love for ever. We ask all in Thy dear Son's name. Amen.



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LUKE xxii. 31, 32.—" And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren."

THE Lord Jesus here Himself affirms the existence and the attempts of Satan. And in the matter of salvation, it is most important for us to realize the danger, that we may the more appreciate the rescue. Satan desires to have. The Saviour pleads to keep. And the matter in question is the soul of man. What solemn interests hang round a subject such as this! The enemy seeks to injure; but the Saviour comes forward to protect. It is a mental and moral conflict, and the victory is not of force, but of faith. The

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mischief attempted is called a "sifting as wheat." the very process, the precious is separated from the vile—the solid abides, but the unsettled and unstable fail. We may take Simon's history to explain the Saviour's prayer. We know that Peter fell, because his faith faltered. We understand that he did not fall away, because his faith revived. The prayer of the Lord Jesus was associated with His own prediction, "before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice." They were all sifted, and they were all scattered like the chaff before the wind; yet Satan, who desired to have, had them not. The cause was the Saviour's pleading. Between the enemy and the soul, the Redeemer only can stand. His claim only can be heard, and it is heard, "Deliver from going down to the pit, for I have found a ransom." And the consequence was, that Simon was converted. The timid denial was turned into a life-long testimony of bold and noble faith. It was for this weak one. that the Saviour prayed. Satan hath denied to have you; but I have prayed for thee. The prayer was for The firm faith returned to the one. conversion was a conspicuous fact in the one. the one acted on the many. "Strengthen thy brethren," explains how the divine power came through the human instrument, and the result was a compacted body of true men, who triumphed together over the common foe. It is good to remember how men can thus be "workers together

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with God;" how the one Saviour has many instruments; how the grand success is associated not only with the master, but with the humblest servant. The champions against Satan are like David before the giant. The conquerors are men upheld by grace. The victory is gained when we are strong in the Lord, and so resist the devil, till he flees. And thus the bond of a holy sympathy is formed between man and man: the covenant of mutual support is entered into by which the Lord is on our side, and we stand side by side with all who are true to truth. triumph is Christ's. He is really ranged against the enemy of our souls. Because He conquered, we can fight. Because He mediates, we are delivered. praise to Him, the Church's champion, and the soul's defence against evil.

COLLECT.

O God, who art our refuge and strength, Thou art our help in time of need. Help us against the enemy; for vain is the help of man. We are in the presence of the enemy; but we are in Thy presence too. Suffer us not to fall under temptation. Strengthen us with might by Thy Spirit in the inner man. Thine own high honour is involved; for Thou wilt not vacate Thy throne. Thy people's eternal interests are concerned; and Thou wilt not suffer Thy truth to fail. Look upon the covenant. Look upon Thy Church as the purchased possession of Jesus.

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For His sake, keep and uphold Thy people. Hear us, according to Thy grace and truth, for Christ's sake. Amen.



Tuesday in Fifth Week after Easter.

1 THESS. i. 9, 10.—" Ye turned to God from idols, to serve the living and true God; and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come."

CHRISTIAN life is a service and an expectation. begins by an escape; for until Jesus has delivered us by grace, and encouraged us by His promise to continue under His protection till we are rescued from the coming wrath, there will be no true decision, no real consecration of life to Him. It is an honour to any man when he "serves the living and true God." Because God is true, the servant can never be disappointed; and because God is living, the servant can never become desolate. By necessity of His nature Independence in a creature is imman must serve. possible while a Creator lives. And the very faculties within may tell that there are attachments without and above, on which the faculties were intended to take "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's hold.

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business," applies to the Christian as to Christ. cupy," is written on the possessions of every man. But Christians have turned from the evil to the good -from the false to the true-from the foolish to the wise. To serve what man has made is to put the sinner in a grade below himself. This was Paul's great argument at Athens. Quoting their poet, he showed "we are God's offspring." Pointing to the idols on every side, he showed they were "graven by art and man's device." And so to serve an idol was to descend below our manhood, and to cause the Maker to bow to the thing made. Christianity restores man to his manhood. But life is also an expectation. It is "to wait for His Son from Heaven." We know He must come, because He has been raised again from the dead. We feel that we may welcome Him when He does come, because He will deliver us from wrath; therefore we can The Christian can wait, because he has a patient spirit. The Christian must wait, because he can neither hinder nor hasten the lapse of ages nor the purposes of the Most High. The Christian will wait, because the attitude becomes him, and the act delights him, and the expectation elevates him. He waits, because the coming One is God's own glorious Son. He waits, because the direction of the coming is from Heaven—out of a home of light, into which the coming One will admit—down from a world of glory, up to which the coming One will

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What a history is that of a sinner saved by grace! Take the instance given in this Thessalonian Think of minds, which once called idols to be gods, rising into a fuller and wider acquaintance with the true God, whom to know is everlasting life! Think of hearts only filled with gloomy fears! For idols have never represented love. They gendered fear, and taught subjection: but heathenism has no Father of love and loveliness. Then picture these hearts burning in love for the living and the truethrilled with hope for the heavenly and the purelonging in gratitude for the holy and the good. Christianity has glorious triumphs. Even now its effects will show that it is of God; but what will it be when the waiting ones meet the coming One, and the system is complete!

COLLECT.

Lord God of grace and love. We thank Thee for what we are. Once we were deceived and enslaved. Once we had only doubts and fears. Now Thy truth has made us free. We stand before Thee in Christ Jesus our Lord, Thy willing subjects, Thy loving children, Thy ready servants. Help us to live up to the light we have. But teach us also to wait for the fuller light which shall be ours, when our great Redeemer comes. We wait, and our hearts worship. We wait, and our faith sustains. We wait, and our

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hopes ascend. Keep us by Thy grace, and for Thy glory. We ask in Christ's name. Amen.



Wednesday in fifth Week after Easter.

2 SAM. vi. 11, 12.—"And the ark of the Lord continued in the house of Obed-edom the Gittite, three months: and the Lord blessed Obed-edom, and all his household. And it was told King David, saying, The Lord hath blessed the house of Obed-edom, and all that pertained unto him, because of the ark of God. So David went and brought up the ark of God from the house of Obed-edom into the city of David with gladness."

THE ark of God represented God's presence. As a covenant head, He dwelt between the cherubim. The Philistines had no care for such presence to be amongst them. They knew not what it was; and had they known, they could have had no wish that it might continue. And the people of Israel had grown careless as to where the ark might be; and so it had been left in Obed-edom's house. The heathen's hostility continues; and the Church's indifference has been seen since. And whenever any change has come—change in a people's opinion, change in a people's

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choice, the elements of change have been found to be such as are discoverable in this passage. "It was told King David, saying, the Lord hath blessed the house of Obed-edom, and all that pertained unto him, because of the ark of God." When men welcome God, it becomes apparent that they become happy in their choice. Apart from the immediate consequences in a quiet conscience, and a bright hope, and a higher principle, and a holier purpose, and a more defined career (and in such things a blessing is found); apart and above all this is the direct blessing from God Himself. He holds back enemies, and showers down mercies. He speaks peace, and inspires confidence, and the people who bless God are blessed.

And when happiness is thus explained in some, it becomes thus desired in others. Religion revived rises into its rightful place of authority and honour amongst men. "So King David went and brought up the ark of God from the house of Obed-edom into the city of David with gladness." It is a good thing when religion becomes the concern of the many, which had been only the business of the few. It is a happy thing when it passes from the private into the public recognition. It is a hopeful thing when men who stand high in thought, in influence, in position amongst men, have grasped that worthy idea, that God's presence confers honour upon the greatest, while it imparts blessedness to the very humblest, of mankind. Where is the ark of God in this our day? What

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expressions amongst ourselves are showing that we bring God's presence with gladness into the very highest places of our land? The nation that casts off God will never rise into spiritual greatness, or settle down into real peace. And the home that welcomes the Almighty—realizes the ark of God, with all its covenant engagements on God's part, and with all its privileged approach on the part of man—will never want a blessing. The men of Beth-shemesh welcomed the ark while they were reaping their harvest. The heavenly presence did not forbid the earthly labour. It is so still. Busy men can yet serve Christ. And homes lose none of the homely aspects because the ark of God is there. Holy in heart, heavenly in aspiration, we may still be very earnest and very active men.

COLLECT.

Thy blessing, O Heavenly Father, is upon Thy people. They who are not ashamed of Jesus need never be ashamed. Whatever others do. we will serve the Lord. While we live in time, enable us to live for eternity. And while we dwell amongst men do Thou, O Lord, dwell in the midst and be our God. While the ark abides, bid us be content to settle. When the ark goes on, may we be ever ready to follow. God shall be our guide. Make us, O Holy Father, to be Thine for evermore. We ask through Jesus Christ. Amen.



Ascension Day.

ACTS i. 9-11.—" While they beheld, He was taken up; and a cloud received Him out of their sight. And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven, as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven."

No witnesses were needed for the resurrection. It was proof enough that he who had died was now alive again. But the fact of the ascension was to be seen that it might be asserted. And so mortal eyes saw Him go up, and angelic messengers came down to tell that He had been received into Heaven. Well may we apply the term "Holy" to Ascension Day. The glorious event commemorated has given elevation to all our hearts. The attitude of the Church in every age has since been this, "gazing up into Heaven." In heart and thought thither we should all ascend. "Thou hast ascended up on high; Thou hast led captivity captive." Jesus went up as a con-

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queror—as a forerunner—as a pioneer. The mystery of His ascension fills imagination with the conception what His majesty must have been. It helps us to form a well-founded expectation as to what His glory is to be. "This same Jesus shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into Heaven." "Behold, He cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see Him." "The Lord cometh with ten thousand of His saints," and every living soul that ever gazed in faith and longing hope will then appear These lower clouds still shut out the brightness of His glory; but they do not dim its brightness. When Stephen said, "I see the Heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God,"-the sight was real, and the Saviour was truly there. There He still abides. will not come till He shall return in His glory. have not seen the cleft cloud, and the bright throne beyond. It was not needful that we should. we still are gazing heavenwards. The storm-clouds sweep low and darken earth, and the mid-day glory becomes too bright and deep for our poor weak eyes to bear. But "faith is the substance of things hoped for," and we know that He shall come. the evidence of things not seen;" and we believe that they are all on high. Oh! for the ascension of the soul! for the following that track behind the cloud, that our heart at least may be with Jesus. is because Jesus is now so high, that His religion

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spreads so far. Up to His throne any prayer may come, and from this far-off earth of ours no appreciable difference can be seen in the position of any who rise up in faith towards Him. The glorious ascension of Christ has lifted up every Christian man, and every Christian experience, into a holier and a higher stage. We belong to a community of which the Master is on high. We are journeying towards a country of which the metropolis is above. And every soul that passeth away departs to be with Christ. Well may we thank God that Jesus has passed into the heavens.

COLLECT.

Thou high and lofty One, that inhabitest eternity, our advocate is with Thee. We rejoice in His glory. We take pleasure in meditating on His majesty. Because He is so great, we are honoured. Because He is so high, we are enabled to rise in love, in desire, in expectation of His return. We look steadfastly into Heaven; for it has received our dearest Friend. We stand gazing still; because we know He has not forgotten His people. Draw out our hearts, O God, after Jesus. Send down the consolations of Thy grace from Jesus. Enable us to stand before the world in the attitude which attests that we expect to be with Jesus. Hear us for His sake. Amen.

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Friday after Iscension Day.

1 THESS. iv. 13, 14.—" I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him."

THERE is nothing in the Gospel of Christ which forbids a man to mourn. In this vale of tears there will be sorrow. But the play of holy light will make prismatic colours upon a tear. And the shining of a heavenly hope may tell that there is sunshine above clouds. Our earthly friends fall asleep in Jesus, and our human hearts have sorrow. But it is not hopeless: it is not helpless sorrow. We believe certain facts concerning them, and then we dry our eyes, and comfort our souls, for the departed are not lost—the dead are living still. Thus "we believe that Jesus died and rose again." There was mystery in His dying; but it was explained by His resurrection. There was merit in His dying; and His resurrection proved that it was recognized and accepted in Heaven. "He died for our sins; and rose again for our justification." In death He became answerable for our debt; and in rising He announced that He had paid

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its very last farthing. It was the liberation of our surety, because His liability was discharged. things are not bare ideas of man; they are facts in history, and realities in the moral government of the We believe them. We argue upon them. We get meaning out of them. And this is the blessed result, to cheer us all life long. "Even so them also which sleep in Jesus shall God bring with Him." What a bright thought that is which reminds us that our dear ones "sleep in Jesus"—like a child in its mother's arms. "They rest from their labours." They have escaped the restlessness of pain, and the wakefulness of care, and now they are asleep. body lies peacefully, and feels no cold, or damp, or darkness in its narrow grave. The soul rests consciously, folded in the arms of love, cradled in the lap of power. And Jesus is to return one day. weary world is ever turning to that door of hope. The waiting servants are ever listening for that joyful cry, "Behold the bridegroom cometh." The dawn of that better day will drive all gloom before it. with Jesus all our dear ones will return, whose names have been written in the Lamb's book of life. let us see that the golden link of faith has united us and them to Christ; and all the rest must follow. Nothing can keep Jesus away from claiming His crown and His blood-bought people. Nothing can separate a soul that sleeps in Him from the Saviour on whom Therefore, the foundations of our hope are

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solid, and the building up of our argument will be complete. Nothing can unmake what the love of Christ has made. It cannot be that He never died. He has risen—it is finished and done. They who have died in faith are alive with Christ. The certainty of their rest in Him is not disturbed by the contentions among men. And if we thus can rise from fact to fact, and find all firm, then we can look still higher, and say with a faith which cannot be shaken, "Even so, them also which sleep in Jesus, will God bring with Him."

COLLECT.

Our Father, which art in Heaven, the living and the dead are all before Thee. In our sorrows, and in their joys, Thou art equally and always the God of love and tender mercies. In this world of change we lay hold upon the unchangeableness of Thy name, and work, and power. Our dear ones depart to be with Thee. And we cleave the closer to Thee, because they are gone. Draw us, dear Father, to Thyself. Cause us to rest more simply in Jesus, that we may be complete in Him, and He may be all in all to us. Be it so with us, our Father, for Christ's sake. Amen.



Saturday after Ascension Day.

Saturday after Ascension Day.

LUKE xxiv. 50-52.—" And He led them out as far as Bethany; and He lifted up His hands, and blessed them. And it came to pass, while He blessed them, He was parted from them, and carried up into heaven. And they worshipped Him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy."

"THE blessing of the Lord maketh rich;" and when Jesus lifted up His hands and blessed them, the hearts of the disciples would be rich in peace, rich in grace, rich in a holy joy. But after the blessing came the parting. Yet even in that there was a gleam of joyfulness. What if they were lonely, was not He carried up into Heaven! The parting was not a final farewell; it was but the Saviour's entrance into light, to open the kingdom of Heaven to all believers. "Who shall separate us from the love of He went up, but only as the conqueror enters before his army into the city that welcomes his return. He was parted from them; but only as the redeemed soul mounts upwards, the guarantee that the body is not always to remain below. was carried up into Heaven; and this is the echo which has come to earth, "Lift up your heads, O ve

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gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of glory shall come in." The Lord's ascension has raised the Church's idea both of His glory and His victory; and so it is that we are told, "And they worshipped Him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy."

The secret of holy worship is a high appreciation. We cannot bow in reverence before the mean. We do not prostrate hearts before the men who fail. Adoration comes of admiration; and it is when the Lord is high and lifted up, that the people fall down on their faces at His footstool. Low views of Jesus will never justify high service in His sanctuary. We worship only when we fully understand how holy and how high He is. And after a high and holy worship the heart returns in joy. From the holy calm and exalted experiences of Bethany, the return to the hot strife and bitter resentments of Jerusalem would be in painful contrast. But the disciples returned with joy. What they had seen, what they had felt, what they had offered, was a bright memory, and a burning reality in their very soul from henceforth. Master was in Heaven, and His eye was on them He had gone up to take all power in Heaven and in earth; and His heart was towards them still. They returned to Jerusalem in the consciousness of a holy mission from Jesus to a perishing world; they returned with the energy of a new conviction, that they must triumph because of the truth.

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returned with the experience of a new emotion; and whatever might come to them by reason of their love for Jesus, they would love, they must love none so much as Him. No wonder that they returned with joy. Any man may well be happy, who knows that he has a Master in Heaven, and he is to spend eternity in glory with Him. And so men should carefully inquire, Has my faith realized how high Jesus is? Has my service before Jesus been indeed a worship—the homage of the heart, the reverence of the understanding, and the ready obedience of the will? Have I returned from worship into the world, happy because fully persuaded that "my beloved is mine, and I am His?"

COLLECT.

Lord of all power and might! Heaven is full of Thy glory; and earth is to be full of Thy praise. We desire now to worship Thee in spirit and in truth. Our Saviour has entered into Heaven, and we have an advocate with Thee. Our faith would lay hold upon His promise, and plead the merit of His precious blood. We have access to Thee through Jesus. We stand humbly in Thy presence, and we ask for Thy grace. We pray that we may glorify Thee. We pray that we may be found faithful to Thee. Lord, keep us according to the covenant, keep us for Thy dear Son's sake. Amen.



ROM. viii. 33, 34.—" Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us."

THESE are not the questionings of fear, but the selfcongratulations of faith. They tell us how a Christian faces the memories of his sins, faces the accusations of his enemy, faces even the holy majesty of his God. They set out certain great arguments by which the people of God can prove that being "partakers of the benefits," they reckon upon being sharers in the inheritance with the saints in light. Who shall lay anything to their charge? Shall God? He who has chosen them in love, and called them by His grace, has He done all this, to close it by an accusation against His people? The history of redeeming love forbids that it can be so with God. Besides, it is God that justifieth; and is He who has acquitted as a judge, to come down from His throne to be an accuser? The relation of the reconciled Father forbids that it can be so with God. not the Father, can it be the Son? Who is he that

condemneth? Can it be Jesus? What, when Christ has died, "the just for the unjust, to bring us to Can we conceive that the Shepherd who laid down His life for the sheep, should become the hireling, and hand the flock over to the ravening wolves? And if this first fact in redemption makes it impossible for Jesus to condemn those who have had faith in Him, then every subsequent transaction increases the difficulty and establishes the impossibility, that Jesus should be against His people. is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again." If His love continued in His suffering, will it disappear in His victory? Is Christ with the weakness of frail humanity, kind when He is low, and contemptuous when He has become great? The very thought raises a blush of shame at such a suspicion concerning Him. But if not the risen, will the ascended Saviour turn against His faithful ones? Shall He forget who is at the right hand of God? What if He has retired upon His own glory! What if He should be absorbed with the homage of the multitudes round about His throne! But He is in Heaven, not only for Himself, He "also maketh intercession for us." Can He be for us and against us too? Thus faith argues. Thus the holy facts become a heavenly stair up which hope can climb to the height of the mystery of redeeming love. And mark, how all is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Not one idea enters in from the worthiness of man, or

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the clemency of Satan, or the lessening or lowering of the demands of law. Salvation keeps the sinner in his place, as one that has nothing to pay, nothing to plead but Jesus. It keeps the commandment in its integrity, as the never-changing ordinance in which the King has expressed His wisdom and His love, and His just and holy requirements. Things are laid to the charge of sinful men; but Iesus meets The sins are recorded in the sinner's conscience, in the annals of this world's doings; but Jesus has cancelled them, and the names in His book of life have no record of wrath attached. the horror of being found out of Christ! Charged, condemned, cut off, the unforgiven must be. the joy of being found in Christ! justified, changed, kept; "Who is He that condemneth?"

COLLECT.

O, our God, Thou art ever holy, and we have been unclean! Yet in Jesus we can draw near. We make mention of His merits. We appear in the righteousness which is by faith. We are mindful only of His saving grace and power. The law accuses us. Our own hearts condemn us; but in Jesus we have peace. Father, look upon the blood which cleanseth us from all sin. Holy Jesus, help us to look only unto Thee. Thy death and passion, Thy glorious resurrection and ascension, Thy perpetual priesthood and intercession, these are the things

which make us know that while we are in Thee, we are not condemned. Make us more conscious that we are Thine, for Thy mercy's sake. Amen.

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MATT. viii. 2, 3.—" Behold, there came a leper and worshipped Him, saying, Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean. And Jesus put forth His hand, and touched him, saying, I will; be Thou clean: and immediately his leprosy was cleansed."

It is an attribute of mercy, that it attracts misery; and when the light of love appears, the children of want crawl out from their darkness and despair. And Tesus was both light and love. Power went forth from Him, and gratitude ran clamouring after Him; and His walk was a going about doing good, winning confidence, and justifying both faith and hope. poor weary leper had the homage of a heart for Jesus. Very sad was his experience of man. He was out of humanity's reach. He could only put others on their guard against himself; his wretched garb, and his melancholy cry told how lonely, how sad, how hope-But he could approach Jesus. less he must be. very soul was drawn out in revering admiration when this holy friend of miserable humanity passed by. Only one doubt remained. There was no question about His power; but what as to willingness!

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would plead his trust in the one, and leave Iesus to "Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou decide about the other. canst make me clean!" And the Lord put forth His hand, and touched him. It was the touch of the holy whom not even a leprosy could defile. the touch of the merciful, who laid a brother's hand of love on him from whom all others shrunk in fear. It was the touch of the powerful, who could say, "I will; be thou clean." "And immediately his leprosy was cleansed." There is a leprosy of soul which makes a man unclean before his God. It came into the world by sin; and Adam when this plague had smitten him was afraid, and hid himself, when the presence of God was felt. Before that leprosy all human expedients have failed. Nothing ever cured, nothing ever cleansed it. The corrupt fountain never could be reached, and the polluting stream flowed on. sinner must come to Jesus with his sin. soever else he may go; he must find his way to Christ, or he will be unforgiven. And two things draw to Jesus—a consciousness that He is both able and willing to make us clean. Jesus of Nazareth passeth by. Where are the lepers who are wishing to be made whole? All they who know their sins, and hate them; all they who feel their misery, and desire to escape it; all they who acknowledge their helplessness, and are not too proud to accept gratis what can only be had from grace and gift; all such, but only such, can say in the Lord's own presence, "Lord, if Thou wilt,

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Thou canst make me clean." But they who do speak thus, will find Jesus equal to their emergency and open to their appeal. The penitent's cry rises above the clamour of the world, above the accusations of the enemy, above the moanings of misery, above the sighings of despair, and it enters into the Saviour's ears. The friend of sinners stands when humble sinners call. His heart of love prompts Him to lift His hand of power. The response is immediate, "I will." The command is absolute, "Be thou clean." The effect is complete, "his leprosy was cleansed." Oh! the joy of a cleansed conscience! Oh! the restoration of hope to a leper made whole! Who will not thank, who will not trust the Lord Jesus!

COLLECT.

God of love, and mercy; Lord of life and power! We praise Thee. We worship Thee. We glorify Thee. Who can tell out all Thy goodness! Who can show forth all Thy praise! We are sinners saved by grace. We are guilty ones, pardoned in love. We are defiled ones, sanctified for Thy service. Thy loving hand has touched us, and we are whole. Thy gracious words have taught us, and we are made willing. We give ourselves wholly to Thee. Make us more thankful—bid us become more devoted. The memories of mercy, the experiences of grace, the expectations of glory, these things make us Thine. Keep us Thine, for Thy name's sake. Amen.

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2 KINGS iv. 6, 7.—" And it came to pass, when the vessels were full, that she said unto her son, Bring me yet a vessel. And he said unto her, There is not a vessel more. And the oil stayed. Then she came and told the man of God: and he said, Go, sell the oil, and pay thy debt, and live thou and thy children of the rest."

LIBERTY and life; freedom from debt, and freedom from care; these are the things which came into the widow's heart, and into the orphan's home. What precious things they are! Then, heighten the whole history, by thinking it to be true about soul as well as body, about eternity as well as time. So this great subject opens out, till the freshness and the fulness, the depth and the freeness are seen in the things which are of God. The history begins when the crisis of affliction had come upon this poor woman's family. Hope after hope had withered-light after light had been put out. She was very desolate, very powerless, very hopeless. All had failed but God. To His prophet she turned. For His help she Her faith was honourable, and it was looked. She said, "Thine handmaid hath not anything in the house, save a pot of oil." That oil

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failed not to her till all her empty vessels were filled. It is even so with all who come to God by faith. But they must be empty vessels which we bring into His presence—empty hearts, that God's grace may occupy them-empty hands, that God's gifts may fill themthese things we must bring. And out of the abundant gifts will come the abounding blessings. sell the oil, and pay thy debt." Redemption is only grace in one of its many forms. Jesus, when He buys off the captive, and the Holy Ghost, when He causes the freedom to be felt, are but the exhibitions of that marvellous mercy by which the heart of man is enriched out of God's own fulness. The oil was the equivalent of its price; and the price was the condition of deliverance. Iesus is love converted into that which secures salvation. He is Himself the means and the measure of the Father's redeeming grace. But the liberty was in order to the life. for the discharge of debt, and provision of sustenance. It is so also with the soul. First freedom: then The blood was outside on the lintel to keep out death; and the roasted lamb was inside upon the table to keep up life. Jesus is the soul's salvation; but He is also the soul's supply. things are yours, for ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's." Now, all this is as much a marvel of wisdom as it is a mystery of love. The whole manner of relief was above the conception of the widowed woman; but when once made known, it could imme-

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diately be laid hold of by her faith. And what have we to do with the fitness of the great salvation? God will take care of His own matters. How the redemption which is in Christ Jesus may square with considerations of propriety, is God's concern, not ours. The fact for us is our danger, our degradation, our distress. These we cannot see too clearly, or feel too much. The provision for our pardon and peace is not ours, but God's. And this we must take, all this, only this, always this; and by so taking we shall be both satisfied and safe.

COLLECT.

O God of infinite wisdom, boundless resources, and abiding truth, we are dependent ever upon Thee. The poverty of our souls can only be met by Thee. The bonds of our self-caused slavery can be broken by none but Thee. We are without a plan, and without a plea, and without a prospect till we come to Thee. But Thy fulness is our supply. Our vessels are empty—our home is empty—our heart is empty. We accept Thy offers; we obey Thy call; we trust in Thy love. Lord, do for us exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.



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Mednesday in Week after Iscension.

ROM. xi. 33, 34—"O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord, or who hath been His counsellor?"

WISDOM, knowledge, judgments, ways, mind! What thoughts such words must stir when they are applied to God. It is the condescension of the Infinite coming down to the level and suiting Himself to the capacity of our finite powers. It reveals how in all God's dealings with us we shall find thought, and intelligence, and purpose, and plan. It helps us to perceive that in all our services before Him, the very noblest powers of our renewed nature will have happiest and holiest employ. There is originality only with our God; "for who hath known the mind of the Lord, and who hath been His counsellor?" Him, and to Him, and through Him are all things. Backwards we look along the ages of the past, and nothing is before God. He is the fountain-head both of Being and blessing. And forward faith can soar; but only to see every lower thing tending to and terminating in the glory of Him who hath called us by His grace. And as we stand and look into God's character, or stay and ponder over the direc-

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tions of His ways, we can but wonder and adore. "Oh! the depth of His riches." There is wealth in all we find in God. Earthly acquirements are often He who grasps the most of but a gorgeous poverty. them finds that nothing solid is in his hand. God enriches both mind and heart. What wealth of knowledge comes in from the facts He has made known concerning man. What riches of experience are brought home by the enjoyment which He imparts The wisdom and knowledge of God are precious things. And there is depth of these riches. We find gems wherever we dig in this mine; but when we have gathered most, we feel that there is more unfound. Eternity will be needed for a full comprehension of what Iehovah is. So, too, concerning God's ways. They are all judgments, settled after full understanding of every circumstance which can secure a wise decision. They are unsearchable, and past finding out; as if thought might travel ever onwards, and still find some novelties of joy; as if the living man might go in at ever opening doors, and only discover more how vast is the region, how various are the directions, in which God would have us walk! By such thoughts as these we estimate what true religion means. When men look upon it as something which limits liberty, and abridges the pleasures of life, they cannot have thought what life and pleasures When others regard it as something humble, such facts come forward to declare that it

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is the only thing to elevate. When Satan misrepresents our Lord as narrow, and stern, and hard; it is this spirit of wisdom which can prove how great, how gracious, how good He is. No wonder that St. Paul had a holy enthusiasm, and a burning eloquence, and a soul-entrancing joy, when he dwelt upon a theme like this. Oh! the depth of His riches! Who would not search, who cannot recommend all this?

COLLECT.

"Whom have I in heaven, but Thee." glorious and gracious God. The Heaven of heavens cannot contain Thee. Yet Thou lookest upon man. Oh! now look upon us. We are within Thy domains. We are not yet beyond the puttings forth of Thy Thy purposes of love are wise, just as they are pure in motive, and will be perfect in their accomplishment before Thee. We would not walk alone, for we are content to follow Thee. We cannot be satisfied with earth, because our souls yearn for "Thou doest all things well." Thou canst order things right. We wait upon Thee. us graciously and love us freely, for Thou only shalt be our God. Father, for the sake of Jesus, cast not out our prayer. Amen.



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ROM. xii. 1, 2.—" I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God."

BOTH under law and under gospel, God refuses the sacrifices of the dead. Dead beasts, dead bodies, dead souls, are all offensive before Him. "The living, the living he shall praise Thee," is man's natural response to the reasonable requirement of his God. And when He appeals to man, the Apostle's arguments still have power. "I beseech you, by the mercies of God," it "is your reasonable service." What a motive must spring out of God's mercies! It bespeaks man's gratitude—bids the benefited remember his obligation to the Father of Mercies. And what a weight of authority comes out of that other consideration, "it is your reasonable service." God has a claim on man; and man has a duty towards God. Because the Master asks no more than the servant can well render; and the servant will find in the service what will develop and not strain all his faculties and his powers, which enable him and impel him to serve his God. Besides, this higher service of God will free a man from the

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drudgery of Satan, and the defiling tendencies of earth. "Be not conformed to this world." "That which is of the earth is earthy." The affections which creep upon the ground will never bear the riper and the fuller fruits. Man's heart must be lifted up into the air and light of heavenly love and service, or it will never show forth all its power. And more than this. it is only by the renewing of your mind, "that ye may prove that is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God." What God wills is the highest good and the most perfect happiness of His creatures. sinners will go on repeating their old misconceptions, and thinking that God is strict, and severe, and stern. The renewing of the mind must dispel all these delusions of the soul. No one is so much a man as he who relies upon God. No one is so much a happy man as he who makes God's will the guide and governor of his It is the transformed soul that finds its wings and can live in the sunshine of God's upper world of love, and grace, and joy. The living body must be the handmaid and not tyrant of the living soul. The purity of a holy walk—the activities of a loving labour—the quiet submission of a patient bearing of the appointed cross—these are the true honours and the real ornaments of the men who bring a sacrifice holy and acceptable unto God. To keep under the body—to crucify the flesh, with its affections and lusts—to make soul dominant over matter—to obey God rather than man—this is reasonable service.

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is all in love, when the Apostle pressed these things. In the very fervour of his brother's heart he said, "I beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God." It is sound and suitable advice: and we shall do well to hear it still.

COLLECT.

God of the Spirits of all flesh, on whom bodies and souls depend, we delight to do Thy will. Our honour, our duty, our privilege, our pleasure will be found in that. Thy mercies should call forth our love. We have been cumberers of the ground, yet Thou hast not cut us down. And now, the life which Thou hast spared we consecrate to Thee. Make it such as Thou canst accept—a life of love and obedience to Thee. Transformed, renewed, uplifted, we would be Thine for evermore. Hear us, for our Saviour's sake. Amen.

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ROM. xiii. II-I3.—"Now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. Let us walk honestly, as in the day." When the Lord Jesus came to us in His grace, our salvation began. When we shall come to the Lord Jesus in His glory our salvation will be complete. It began in faith, it will end in vision. And during the

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interval the heart has been awake, roused out of a selfish sloth, and kept without a feverish restlessness. It is a night, and yet it is a day. A night, because sin, and sorrow, and shame are here. A day, because light, and grace, and salvation have come down. There are works of darkness, which once were the clothing of our life, and the covering of our souls; but such things we put off. And there is the armour of light--knowledge to protect the mind-love to shield the heart-peace to cover the consciencefaith to guide the judgment-grace to regulate the will. And the night is far spent. Every moment brings us nearer to the dawn—" Now is our salvation nearer than when we believed." "Let us walk honestly, as in the day." "It is high time to awake out of sleep." Many are no more, with whom we began life in the days which can return no more. are hard at hand, needing our help, looking to our example, leaning upon our wisdom and our love. marks out the sublimity of our short and uncertain We are yet in the day, and we can tell friends life. from foes. We are yet in the day, and can distinguish paths of error from ways of righteousness. yet in the day, and Satan's snares, and man's stumblingblocks may be avoided or put aside. And we are moving. As the globe on which we live is moving through space, and we feel it not; so are we also moving through time, though we think it not. us walk honestly." We cannot deceive our God.

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"All things are naked and opened unto the eves of Him with whom we have to do." We must not mislead man; because the cry of the lost, and the tears of the ruined, will be gall and wormwood to our souls, when we can no more undo the mischief we have wrought. We cannot escape ourselves. And when the falsehood of our lives, and the folly of our deception, and the hollowness of our hearts shall be exposed before men and angels—the blush of a guilty shame, and the blot of a dark remorse, will be on us. in us, about us, so that we shall not excuse ourselves. Let us walk honestly. All things bid us be earnest and sincere. The enemy is earnest, when he seeks to destroy both body and soul in hell. The gracious Saviour is earnest, when He offers to save both body and soul in Heaven. All who have entered in before us into glory, are earnest, for they know what bliss And all that have been taken away in their means. iniquities are earnest, for they understand what anguish is. With the uprightness of a honest mind—with the grasp of a honest faith—with the fixedness of a honest purpose—with the directness of a honest effort; "let us walk honestly as in the day."

COLLECT.

"The things which are seen are temporal; and the things which are not seen are eternal." Father, give us an eye for the higher, and an ear for the wiser, and a heart for the better things. Lift us out of the

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shadows, and set us in the midst of the sunlight. Deliver us from a fatal sleep; and rouse us to a real life. "The night is far spent," and we are weary. "The day is at hand," and we wait for the sun to shine upon our soul, upon our life, upon our world. O be with us in our walk, and we shall be with Thee in our rest. Hold us up, for we cling to Thee. We pray, in Jesu's name. Amen.

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MATT. xiii. 37-39.—" He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man. The field is the world: the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one: the enemy that sowed them is the devil: the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels."

A FIELD of wheat and tares, such is the world, and such is life. Two great labourers are busy, Satan and the Son of man. Some things sown are evil, and some things sown are good. "The children of the kingdom, and the children of the wicked one;" such is society, such is experience. And all are growing, ripening, becoming matured for the reaper's scythe. "The harvest is the end of the world, and the reapers are the angels." It is not all dark or desperate, for "He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man." It is not all bright and hopeful; for "the enemy that IV.

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sowed the tares is the devil." Mingled hopes and fears-struggling sighs and joys-meeting passions and graces—crossing lights and shades—such things divide our consciousness. It will not be ever thus: for the reaping will clear the field, and the angels will bind wheat and tares apart. But it is so now. No perfect church, while it is a pastured flock below. No imperfect church, when it is a folded flock above. No hopeless sinners, while the day of mercy lasts. No sinless saints, while the time of temptation continues. The children of the kingdom are children even where Satan dwells. And the kingdom is, and is to come, though riot and rebellion are heard on every side. And the children of the wicked one are found hard by the haunts of the Son of man; and spite of a world of mercies, and in the midst of an atmosphere of grace, they go on in their wicked courses, and set up their unloving parent, and vaunt about their wretched homes. And all this God's holv eye is seeing, and His great heart of love is pitying. And all this God's patient servants must learn to bear with, and act upon for good. The mystery of iniquity will be explained one day, and God will be justified when He is judged. And the marvels of redemption will be told out one day; and God will be glorified when He is known. what are we? The evil is ever fingled with the good: and we are not to attempt to pluck up the tares, lest we pluck up the wheat with them. Yet

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tares are not wheat, neither is wheat tares. is our origin? What is our growth? What will be Honest thought will find out a our ingathering? Thus, what is our idea of sin? sufficient answer. Is it a small matter—a weakness, a mistake, a misfortune? Then the characteristics of the tares are But is it a burden, a sorrow, a shame to us something before which we tremble, from which we should be glad to escape, about which we are deeply moved, and tremblingly alarmed? Such things are growths of grace and not of nature—they betoken the garden of the Lord, and not the wilderness of Then, also, what are our thoughts of the world. Jesus? Careless, contemptuous, depreciating thoughts come from the wicked one. Loving, trusting, longing thoughts belong to the children of the kingdom.

COLLECT.

Eternal God and Father, we are in this world of change; but there is no variableness with Thee. dwell amongst the evil and the good; but we are The harvest of Thy world will known to Thee. come, and we shall be reaped by the angels. us now in grace. Water us still in mercy. Shelter us still in love. We cannot live without Thee. would not live against Thee. "Draw us, and we will run after Thee." Meet us, and we will keep close by Thee. For Thou art our God. Bless us for Thy Son's sake. Amen.



Whit Sunday.

ACTS ii. 1-4.—" And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them: and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance."

This was an expected visit; for the Holy Ghost was the promise of the Father, and the provision of the Son. He came down as the Comforter to fill the Saviour's place. He came down as power to prosper the disciples' work. "They were all with one accord in one place," waiting for His coming. The Spirit came as a wind, a rushing mighty wind from heaven. He shook the place, and filled the house. He came as a fire—lighting, yet not burning—sitting on each—divided amongst them all He came as a speech, and gave them utterance, so that they began to speak

Whit Sunday.

with other tongues. That day of Pentecost was an eventful day to Christ's church and people. then given are existent and effectual still. When a dead soul lives, it is the Spirit that quickeneth it. When a cold heart glows, it is the Spirit that gives it He is the Comforter in such as would have mourned without His grace. He is the Strengthener of such as would have fallen without His help. is the Sanctifier of such as would have continued estranged without the drawings of His power. incarnation of Jesus came by Him. The inspiration of Scripture came by Him. The enlightenment of the Church came by Him. The graces, gifts, comforts, endearments of all saved sinners came by Him. Before He came the testimony of Jesus was not complete, and the awful responsibility of blasphemers was This dispensation of the Spirit is the not filled up. interval between the Advents. The work of the Spirit in the human soul commences in the birth into grace, and will abide till the birth into glory. The witness of the Spirit is the evidence within; and the sealing of the Spirit is the evidence without. Ghost is an earnest, for He reminds us of our Heaven. The Holy Ghost is an educator, for He prepares us for our Heaven. It is a south wind to blow upon the Redeemer's garden, that the spices may flow out. is the breath of life's early spring, when "the winter is past, and the rain is over and gone." Then "the flowers appear on the earth, and the time of the sing-

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ing of birds is come." It is the breath which makes the music come forth from the tuned heart. It is the light which causes the glisten to go out from the polished surface of the mind. It is the fire which helps the frankincense of gratitude to give out its fragrance. It is the shaking wind which makes the olive branches drop their fruit. Holy season! happy season! well may memory turn to the time when the Comforter came down to bless the waiting Church.

COLLECT.

"We know not what to pray for as we ought; but the Spirit maketh intercession for us." We cannot contend with Satan alone; but we are "strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man." "No man hath quickened his own soul;" but "that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." Father, we come as Thy sons in Christ Jesus; and, because we are sons, Thou wilt send forth the Spirit of Thy Son into our hearts, that we may call Thee Father. Teach us to walk in the Spirit—live in the Spirit; and so we will worship Thee in spirit and in truth. All this we beg for Christ's sake. Amen.



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ACTS x. 44-46.—" While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word. And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost: for they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God."

THE mind even of an apostle is narrow, till the spirit expands and enlarges it. The believing Jews could not think of a Gentile ingathering, till the Holy Ghost accomplished it. But facts have often overthrown theories, and success has exceeded expecta-"On the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost." The religion of the Lord Jesus could never be kept within the limits of a nation. Its glorious progress was not to be the monopoly of a generation. Free as the air, forcible as the light, this spiritual tide was to wash every shore, and rush onwards throughout the ages. Therefore its goings forth were so strong, because its goings forward were to be so constant. That gift poured out upon the Gentiles is the secret of our standing in the Church and kingdom of the Most High. If that early vibra-

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tion had not touched a Gentile heart, our hearts had still remained unstirred. That was a wondrous sermon which Peter preached that day; but what can words do, if the Holy Ghost fall not on them that hear? That was a strangely complex gathering when Jewish pride met Gentile scornfulness, as the preaching of the Cross went on; but what can race or speech divide when the uniting spirit draws? and how shall brethren stand apart, when the Spirit "divideth to every man severally as He will." That which breaks down barriers is the swelling tide of grace; that which kills selfishness is the ennobling comprehensiveness of love. The religion of sect thrives in the little colonies of man; the religion of the Church of Christ thrives most amongst the charities and comprehensions of God; and the gift of the Holy Ghost inclines a man and enables a man to glorify God. Without the spirit, poor foolish man lives to glorify himself. If he can flatter and be flattered, he lives in his paradise of self; but the action of the Holv Ghost is to take a man out of littleness into the grandeur of the designs of Heaven; and just as the first emotion of a blind man capable of sight was, "Oh, how beautiful!" so the first expression of a regenerate man when he faces all the goodness and the greatness of God's wide world of love will be, "Oh, how blessed!" "They heard them speak with tongues, and glorify God." tongues were a sign for the times then present. The

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praise will be a service for all the ages, and for the whole family of the blood-bought people. Who does not long for a wider view of all God's purposes of grace? Who will not ask for a loftier feeling of love for all God's great family of the saints? Who cannot strive after a holier tone and a fuller gratitude in the midst of all God's great services of praise? The light and the love, and the lifting up of soul, are the fruits, and gifts, and workings of the Holy Ghost.

COLLECT.

Almighty God, our Heavenly Father, Heaven is Thy throne and earth is Thy footstool, and human hearts and human prayers can only ascend because Thou dost lift them up. Send down Thy spirit upon us, that our spirits may mount up to Thee. In Thy presence there is fulness of joy. In Thy dear Son Jesus there is fulness of grace. By the indwelling of the Holy Ghost there will be in us fulness of faith and power. Teach us by Thy spirit of wisdom. Sustain us by Thy spirit of might. Satisfy us by Thy spirit of hope and love. So shall we live and glorify Thy name, through Jesus Christ. Amen.



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I JOHN iv. 5, 6.—" They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them. We are of God: he that knoweth God, heareth us; he that is not of God, heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error."

Contrasts and contentions; such are our experiences below. Harmonies and unions; such will be our experiences above. The world has an audience, and they listen to such as speak of worldly things; and the things of God, threatenings be they or promises, are considered intrusions and interruptions which the world resents. But the Most High must be proclaimed, in His sovereign demands, and His no less sovereign invitations. And they who speak for God must be men who are themselves of God. is not of God heareth not us." It is a sad fact—a painful, frequent experience; yet God's servants cannot be silenced; and none of His children are born dumb. "If our Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost." "He that knoweth God. heareth us." Because what he enjoys makes him desire to know more. must be the spirit of error. But there is also the spirit of truth. Men must, in truth, take sides.

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that is not with Me is against Me," is the Master's testimony. Some men are of the world; and some men are of God. There must be distinction between "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world; if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." "And marvel not if the world hate you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you." The servants of Christ must take their stand. Theirs is to be burning love, vearning towards God, beaming towards man. Theirs is to be a holy walk, apart from the ways of evil, yet down amongst the lanes of sorrow. Theirs is to be a bold utterance, full as God's truth enables-forcible as God's honour requires. Theirs is to be a heavenly labour—leading blind sinners to Jesus, drawing away foolish sinners from destruction, pleading with men about God, and pleading with God about men. cannot serve God and mammon." "What concord hath Christ with Belial?" "Wherefore halt ye betwixt two opinions?" The final results cannot be uncertain. The spirit of truth will cast out the spirit "The world passeth away, and the lusts thereof; but he that doeth the will of God endureth for ever." The faithful witness, after he has declared his errand, will return to the Master that sent him forth. The husbandman that diligently has scattered the seed will leave his plough in the furrow, and his

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seed-cord under the clod. But the Lord of the harvest sends both the sunshine and the showers. One man soweth, and another reapeth; but both he that soweth, and he that reapeth, shall rejoice together. What if this world be bleak, there is a bright inheritance in Heaven. What if the multitudes refuse, there will be a glorious company who have received the words of eternal life.

COLLECT.

O our gracious God, it is of Thy grace that we know Thee. We are not wiser than our fathers, except as the Holy Ghost has taught us. But because we know, we love. Help us to know more, that we may have the deeper love. Take away all films of prejudice and all blinding influences of folly from before the eye of our soul. Put away all clouds of separation and estrangement from the face of Thy love. So shall we see Thee by faith. So shall we fall down before Thee in adoring love and praise. Hear us for Christ's sake. Amen.



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